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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

"Child of Inordinate Power":
Religion and Politics in Britain after the Quebec Act

BY

ROBIN ELIZABETH CLOSE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1993

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ISBN 0-315-88370-7

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **"Child of Inordinate Power": Religion and Politics in Britain after the Quebec Act** submitted by **Robin Elizabeth Close** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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16 June 1993.

Abstract

The Quebec Act has long been treated by Canadian and American historians as an area of inquiry limited to national interests. Recent historians of the American War for Independence and of British popular culture of the eighteenth century have established that the colonies and the mother country experienced a trans-Atlantic relationship, particularly as policy, ideas and culture were exchanged across the ocean. Unlike historians, who have not adequately considered the consequences of granting the Catholics of Quebec a toleration of their religion in a Protestant empire, this thesis confirms that the Act seen in its British context had a wider impact on British politics than is admitted in traditional accounts. The toleration of Catholicism abroad offered new possibilities for Catholics at home, and with this precedent having been set, the Catholic Relief Act passed in both Houses of Parliament without a division in 1778.

An examination of the print culture, contemporary memoirs and correspondences reveal that the concerns of parliamentarians about the religious clauses of the Quebec Act did not disappear with Royal Assent. Instead, the Act became the subject of both political and theological discourse where the issues of religion and the responsibilities of government frequently surfaced in Parliament and in the press throughout the 1770's. This study explores this relationship between Church and State as it was discussed by contemporaries who supported toleration for nonconformists. Great emphasis has been placed on the evolving meaning of toleration as a political and social concept. Politicians struggled with their understanding of religious conscience and their notion of parliamentary jurisdiction in matters of the faith during the Quebec Act and Catholic Relief Act debates in the years 1774 to 1780. The purpose of this study has also been to show that parliamentarians formulated imperial and domestic policies which challenged traditional views because of the philosophical attitudes of the age. In essence, this study develops the idea that the Quebec Act was a formative influence in the development of a polyglot, multi-religious empire.

Preface

On 17 June 1774, Lord Chatham rose and stood before the House of Lords to deliver his objections to the final amendments of the Quebec Government Bill. He intended to expose the underpinnings of what he viewed as the essence of despotism and tyrannical government in each clause. Chatham branded the Bill "a child of inordinate power" and dared the Bishops to "hold it out for baptism."[1] While not alone in opposition to the Quebec Bill, Chatham, the "Great Patriot", was perhaps the most prominent politician of the time who warned against the threat to domestic peace posed by this tradition-breaking policy.

> He further maintained that the dangerous innovations of the Bill were at variance with all the safe-guards and barriers against the return of Popery and of Popish influence, so wisely provided against by all the oaths of office and of trust from the constable up to the members of both Houses, and even to the sovereign in his coronation oath. He pathetically expressed his fears that it might shake the affections and confidence of his Majesty's Protestant subjects in England and Ireland; and finally lose the hearts of all his Majesty's American subjects. His lordship then said, that for these and other reasons, he gave his hearty negative to the Bill.[2]

In response to Lord Chatham's passionate speech, Lord Lyttelton, who approved of the "lenity and moderation" of the Bill, reported that "the dark times of superstition were past, that the gloomy reign of persecution and priestcraft were now at an end, that science every where diffused had every where enlightened the human mind...."[3] Lyttelton insisted that generosity would win the loyalty of the Canadians to the Crown of England. Denying the Canadians the freedom of their religion would surely lay the foundations for resistance.

The reflections of both Lord Lyttelton and the Earl of Chatham on the religious implications of the Quebec Bill represent the true beginnings of what was to become an extensive debate about the expediency of toleration in imperial and domestic politics throughout the later 1770's. In incorporating French Catholic Canadians into the Protestant Empire by means of the Quebec Act, Parliament fundamentally altered the parameters of debate about the relationship between

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[1] Earl of Chatham in the House of Lords on 17 June 1774. William Cobbett, ***The Parliamentary History of England, from the Norman Conquest in 1066, to the year 1803,*** 36 vols., (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1829, reprinted 1966; hereafter cited as ***Parliamentary History of England***),vol. xvii, 1403.

[2] ***Ibid.***, vol. xvii, 1404.

[3] Lord Lyttelton in the House of Lords on 17 June 1774. ***Ibid.***, vol. xvii, 1405.

religion and the state. Whenever religious controversy erupted, whether in Parliament or in the popular press, we find the Quebec Act singled out for special blame. At the very least, the 1774 Bill gave to British imperial politics a language with which to advance the acceptance of the concept of religious toleration. Opinions on toleration in the affairs of Empire which surfaced in the discussion over Quebec policy, later served as a guideline for politicians defining domestic toleration toward Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters. Nineteenth-century liberal attitudes which spawned the emancipation of Catholics in 1829 have often been associated with religious dissent and nonconformity.[4] Indeed, the dissenting movement in England of the eighteenth century had by the 1760's and 70's shaped the philosophical discussion of toleration and served as an intellectual basis for supporting relief of both Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics from the religious penal laws. The economic crisis of the mid 1770's in Ireland brought to the fore the Catholic question in British politics, raising concerns about the practicality of the religious penal laws which impoverished the majority of Ireland's Catholic population.

This study explores the religious and political issues facing the Palace of Westminster after the passing of the Quebec Bill in 1774 in order to trace the emergence of toleration as a political concept. Chapter One examines both the negative and positive domestic reaction to the Quebec Act in and out of Parliament as an early example of the social and political conditions which were overcome by parliamentarians in favor of greater religious toleration. The second chapter discusses the issues involved in the formulation of a domestic policy for Roman Catholic relief in 1778. This chapter seeks to dispel the notion that toleration was solely motivated by the economic circumstances of the 1770's in Ireland or the American war. The majority of parliamentarians had emerged from the Quebec Act debates confident and equipped to reform the penal laws against Catholics which no longer served any practical purpose in an age considered to be "enlightened" and without the threat of jacobitism. While the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1778, an innovative proposition from the parliamentary Opposition, received full support within Parliament, it produced a violent reaction from Protestants all over Great Britain. Chapter Three investigates this rise of extreme Protestantism and the infamous Gordon Riots of 1780, as well as the extent to which the reaction may have altered the liberal spirit of policy-makers on the topic of religious toleration. The study concludes in Chapter Four with an examination of the meaning of toleration, both philosophical and legal, which followed the urban riots in London of June 1780. Parliamentarians defended

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[4] John Gray, ***Liberalism***, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 27.

the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 on the grounds that it posed no threat to Church or state. The future security of the Protestant religion, contemporaries decided, hinged not on the principles of the Glorious Revolution but on the social conditions of the age.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks must be given to Dr. Philip Lawson for having kindled my interest in eighteenth-century British imperial history. I am grateful to him for his abiding interest and guidance throughout the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Lesley Cormack and Carolee Pollock for their helpful comments and careful editing of the text. The staff at the University libraries of Toronto and Alberta were most helpful during the research stage of my study. Lastly, I would like to thank my dear parents and Paul S. Pirie for their support and enthusiasm as I struggled with my ideas and the frustrations and joys of writing.

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Chapter I
The reaction to the Quebec Act and its attempted repeal: 1774 - 1778

The Quebec Bill received Royal Assent on 22 June 1774. The Act in its final form provided for the government of Quebec as follows: The first clause aimed at clarifying the Indian boundary north of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers by including the territories north of New York and Pennsylvania in the Province of Quebec. The fisheries on the Coast of Labrador were also annexed to the Province. The inhabitants of Quebec, the French Canadians, were guaranteed the freedom and protection of their religion. The Protestant religion, however, was to be encouraged in that Province. The religious clause was accompanied by an oath of allegiance, distinct from the Oath required of all Catholics in Britain under the Statute of Queen Elizabeth, to be taken before the Governor of Quebec. The Roman Catholic Canadians who refused the oath were subject to the penalties of the statute of Queen Elizabeth's reign. The Act did not grant the right to a legislative assembly, nor the full enjoyment of English laws. Instead, a Governor and a council were to form the government in that colony. The civil laws of France were to be maintained while the Criminal Laws of England were also to be secured. Lastly, the Act ensured that the King of England was the overseer of all governmental, judicial, and ecclesiastical policy to be enforced in the colony. His Majesty was also entitled by the Act to "constitute Courts of Criminal, Civil, and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction."[1] At the same time, Parliament passed the Quebec Revenue Act to raise funds for the Administration of Justice and Support of the Civil government of Quebec.

The Quebec Act did not easily pass through both Houses of Parliament.[2] The debates proved more complicated than Lord North had anticipated, especially for the

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[1] ***Anno Decimo Quarto Georgii III. Regis. Cap. LXXXIII An Act for making more effectual Provision for the Government of the Province of Quebec in North America.*** In Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, eds., ***Canadian Archives Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada***, (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the King's most excellent Majesty, 1907), 401-405.

[2] "The Bostonian and Quebec Bills were disputed to the last by the small minority under the Duke of Richmond, rather than Lord Rockingham, who, however, spoke well on one of those debates. Lord Gower, Lord Sandwich, and Lord Dartmouth defended them, and Lord Mansfield till the last reading of the Quebec Bill,... The Duke of Richmond reproached Lord Dartmouth with supporting these bills after having been one of the protestors against the Stamp Act. The Duke, being reproached by Lord Gower for dissenting from the majority and venting his opinions, answered, with just severity, that in the last rebellion no man had been questioned for speculative prejudices, though they might have had one foot in the stirrup to join the Pretender- the case of Lord Gower's father. Lord Hillsborough, all courtier as he was, opposed the Quebec Bill, and, glancing at Lord Dartmouth, said it must have been the work of a child in politics. The latter answered that was the objection of an old dotard." P.D.G. Thomas and R.C. Simmons, ***Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliament Respecting North America 1754-1783***, (New York: Kraus International Publications, 1987), 232. See also Bernard Donoughue for the suggestion that opposition in England subsided fairly quickly following the passage

second reading in the House of Commons. While there had been some heated debate on the American Bills in the early spring, the Bills had passed with little division; a fact that suggested contemporaries may have believed that the provision for the government of Quebec would follow shortly.[3] On the 3 May 1774, George III expressed confidence in a dispatch to Lord North that the House of Commons would give as much support to the Bills for the impartial administration of Justice, the Canada Regulation and Revenue Bills as it had done the American Regulation Bill.[4] By 8 June, the King shared North's surprise at the conclusions drawn by the House of Commons Committee on the Quebec Bill regarding some of the "more material" clauses examined and he expressed the hope that there would be no further trouble in the latter stages of the Bill. [5]

The intensity of the debates on the Quebec Bill arose from the Opposition's overall suspicion of the Administration's imperial and metropolitan policy. The Bill came at the time of the American Crisis and compromised standard constitutional privileges known in Britain. Because the Bill had been delayed in 1774 on account of the American situation, the timing of the Quebec Bill accounts for some of the ire expressed against it, since it followed soon after the Coercive Acts passed in the spring of 1774. American sympathizers, especially the more radical Members of Parliament, such as Colonel Barré and Thomas Townshend, treated the Bill as another of the Ministry's arbitrary policies toward America.

The Act proposed a new form of imperial policy different from England's policy in Ireland where the Roman Catholics majority were subject to the penal laws of England, thus remaining disadvantaged under the rule of a Protestant minority. The penal laws that were in place restricted the ownership of property and religious practice. Roman Catholics were not allowed to hold any office of government unless they took the Oath of Allegiance to the King of England nor could they sit in Parliament unless they renounced their faith. Nor could the King of England employ Roman Catholics in the military. Lord North argued on 26 May 1774 that these laws

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of the Bill. Bernard Donoughue, ***British Politics and the American Revolution The Path to War, 1773-75*** (London: 1964), 106.

[3] Boston Port Bill passed without a division on 25 March. The Bill for regulating the Government of Massachuset's Bay in the final debate in the Commons divided in the positive: 127 in favor and 24 against. W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xvii, 1189 and 1320.

[4] The King to Lord North, 3 May 1774, ***The Correspondence of King George The Third 1760-1783***, vol. iii, Hon. Sir. John Fortescue ed., (London: Macmillan and co., ltd), 103.

[5] The King to Lord North, 8 June 1774, ***Ibid.***, vol. iii, 110

did not extend beyond the two Kingdoms and were therefore inapplicable in the case of Quebec.[6]

The Quebec Bill was daring when one considers the solidarity shown in Parliament against relief for the Dissenters in 1773. The Lords divided 86 to 28 (including proxies) against the Bill. [7] Not all the supporters of the Dissenters' Bill in the House of Lords were paragons of toleration over the Catholic question. For example, on 17 May 1775, 12 of those 28 supporters (against only 5 of the 102 opponents) voted for Camden's bill to repeal the Quebec Act. [8] Lord Camden and the Earl of Chatham, who had argued in favor of the Dissenter Relief Bill of 1772, argued against the Quebec Act as establishing popery in the colony, although they had both argued in favor of a liberal toleration in religious affairs, regarding Protestants. To underline the complexity of issues raised by the measure, it is worth noting that the Quebec Bill also became an issue for the parliamentary reformers. They linked clauses of the Bill to the growing arbitrary power of the Crown and the North Ministry. Charles James Fox who supported the Bill in general was not satisfied with the process of development of the Quebec Bill. He accused the Administration in the Commons on 26 May 1774 of infringing on the jurisdiction of the House of Commons by attempting to bring in a money bill which had originated in the House of Lords.[9]

The reaction to the Bill following its passage, both popular and parliamentary, is a domain of emerging interest for historians. The Quebec Act has had very few complete works dedicated to it in the English speaking world. The most recent work by David Milobar, considers the Act in its imperial context discussing the trans-Atlantic experience of resistance to the Act. He argues the Act was a conservative measure on the part of the British who were preoccupied by the American crisis. The Quebec Bill united both English and American radicals in the view that the Bill was

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[6] J., Wright, ed., ***Sir Henry Cavendish's Debates of the House of Commons in the year 1774 on the Bill for Making More Effectual Provision of the Government of the Province of Quebec*** (London: Ridgway, 1841-43), 12.

[7] The Peers who supported the Bill for relief of Protestant Dissenters were the dukes of Richmond, Devonshire, and Portland, Manchester, Northumberland, Athol, and Newcastle; marquis of Rockingham; earls of Coventry, Tankervill, Talbot, Hardwicke, Besborough, Buckinghamshire, Northington, and Shelburne; viscounts Say and Seale, and Torrington; Lords Camden, Dispencer, Romney, Trevor, Milton, Lyttelton and Mansfield; and the bishop of Lincoln. The two proxies were the earl Fitzwilliam and Lord Archer. W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xvii, 790.

[8] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xviii, 676. See G.M. Ditchfield, "The Subscription Issue in British Parliamentary Politics, 1772-79," ***Parliamentary History***, 7(1)-1988, 76, n. 76.

[9] J. Wright, ed., ***Sir Henry Cavendish's Debates of the House of Commons in the year 1774 on the Bill for Making More Effectual Provision of the Government of the Province of Quebec***, 62.

part of a plot to subvert the constitution.[10] Milobar regards English radical reaction to the religious clause during the elections in 1774 to be very important in rendering the British Parliament conservative in its later policies toward Quebec. He does not discuss whether or not the Act or the debates set a precedent in furthering Catholic relief on domestic soil.

Few historians have considered the Quebec Act as an important step forward in religious toleration. Philip Lawson has established that the Act was a constitutional challenge to Britain and its notion of an Empire based on Protestantism. Lawson traces the development of the Bill from 1765 under the Rockingham administration until the North Administration's policy was introduced to Parliament in 1774. Early principles of toleration embodied in Shelburne's Quebec policy of 1767 were not so dissimilar to the toleration of Catholicism guaranteed by the Quebec Bill of 1774. Looking ahead, Lawson proposes that recognition of Catholicism by the Quebec Act enabled future politicians of similar mind to take further steps towards toleration, a painstaking process which was to occur over several generations.[11] He does not develop this alleged connection between the Quebec Act and eventual emancipation for Roman Catholics, as it exceeds the scope of his study. Nor does he treat the period following the Quebec Act in other than the epilogue of his work, where he briefly discusses the general reception of the Act amidst the general elections.

Indeed 1774 to 1780 is a period which has not attracted much scholarship. Historians dealing with the American Crisis and the crucial imperial issues of the 1770's have tended to focus on the preceding decade as essential background, rather than explore subsequent events for explanation. James E. Bradley includes a brief discussion of the Act in the latter period in his most recent study of religious nonconformity during the American Crisis. Bradley treats the Quebec Act as a coercive piece of legislation, particularly as it related to the dissenting interest which constituted the most important part of middle-class opinion.[12] The Dissenters' alarm at the passage of the Quebec Act after having been themselves unable to gain relief from subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles and their dismay at the coercive stance of the government on America, led the Dissenters to sound the alarm against the

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[10] David Milobar, ***The Constiutional Development of Quebec from the French Régime to the Canada Act of 1791: A British Perspective***, PhD dissertation (University of London, 1990), 148.
[11] Philip Lawson, ***The Imperial Challenge*** , (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 42-59.
[12] James E. Bradley, ***Religion, Revolution, and English Radicalism: Nonconformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society***, (Cambridge: University Press, 1990), 30.

Administration.[13] The debates over the Quebec Act, which were seen by the Dissenters as an infringement on the natural rights of Englishmen, revealed an interlocking of religious and political issues.[14] Bradley concludes that religion proved to be "highly divisive and politically potent" in rallying opposition to the Administration. [15]

Similarly, G.M. Ditchfield, primarily concerned with the history of the subscription issue in the 1770's, mentions briefly the debates over the Quebec Act amidst mounting hostility between Church and dissent over the status of the latter. According to Ditchfield, the American crisis (1775) altered the political climate as did the French war (1778). As a result the Administration felt obliged to repeal sections of the penal code relating to property ownership and education in order to raise Catholic troops in England and Ireland. He characterizes 1778 as a period of militant Protestantism and of anti-popery. The anti-Catholic sentiment which followed the Roman Catholic Relief Act opened doors for the Protestant Dissenters and their relief program, thus the Bill in 1779.[16] While Ditchfield does treat some important aspects of religious toleration, he does not give much credit to issues raised by the Quebec Act. Anti-popery sentiment must be addressed, however, because the attempted repeal of the Quebec Act made in the Commons in 1778 did not reflect this mood at all. One can take from Ditchfield's conclusions, though, the idea that Parliament aimed for a balance between extreme Protestantism and Catholicism while reflecting a preference for the established religion in the exercise of political influence.

Historians have examined opposition and resistance in the late 1770's and have considered the Quebec Act in that setting, but have not considered the significance of the failure to repeal the Act either through popular pressure or by parliamentary opposition. The primary sources suggest, in fact, that there really was not any substantial opposition. Indeed, the opponents of the Quebec Act made a lot of noise during the elections but not enough to rally a large number of supporters. English radicals used the same language to oppose the Quebec Act as that employed in opposing the administration and its domestic and American policies. It is evident that radical opposition to the Quebec Act was viewed by contemporaries as radical rhetoric both exclusive and particular to that group. More moderate individuals

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[13] J. E. Bradley, "Religion and Reform at the Polls: Nonconformity in Cambridge Politics, 1774-1784," ***Journal of British Studies***, vol. 23, 1983, 62.
[14] J. E. Bradley, ***Religion, Revolution, and English Radicalism***, 150.
[15] ***Ibid.***, 30.
[16] G.M. Ditchfield, "The Subscription Issue in British Parliamentary Politics, 1772-79," ***Parliamentary History***, 7(1)-1988, 61.

would have been hard pressed to oppose the Act without being associated with radical thinking. In other words, does the failure to repeal the Act imply that Parliament resisted all issues tinged by the radical platform or were parliamentarians just more pre-occupied with the American crisis? Or, does it suggest that Parliament was enlightened, seeing the efficacy of religious toleration in imperial affairs?

It is the intent of this chapter to examine the reaction to the passage of the Quebec Act both in and out of Parliament between 1774 and 1778. An examination of the extra-parliamentary activity in 1774 and during the elections should reveal the extent to which the radicals used the Quebec Act as a tool for rallying support against the Administration. A clearer picture of the arguments in favor of the Act should also become more apparent. Following discussion of the elections of October 1774, the attempted repeal of the Quebec Act in 1775 put forward by the parliamentary opposition in both Houses of Parliament will be considered along with Sir George Savile's second repeal attempt made in 1778 in the Commons. What is to be established is the extent to which both the extra-parliamentary and parliamentary activities in favor of and in opposition to the Quebec Act began the discussion of religious toleration, the first stage in further relief of Roman Catholics. This theme will then be explored further in the other chapters of this thesis.

One of the first moves in opposition to the passage of the Quebec Bill was the Petition of the City of London to the King on 22 June 1774. The Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and "a great number of Commoners" set off from Guildhall to St. James's with the Address requesting that Royal Assent not be given to the Quebec Bill. [17] The event had been announced as early as 16 June 1774; people were invited to attend the meeting at the Guildhall where formulation of the Petition would take place.[18] It was reported on 18 June that the Petition was very "strong and pointed." [19] The Petition was presented on behalf of the Protestant interest in Quebec, stating that the Bill would be injurious to further settlement of that Province as well as to the settlers already established in the Province. By the Proclamation of 1763, settlers of the "reformed religion" had been invited to colonize Quebec under the promise of the benefit of the laws of the Realm of England. The Petition further claimed that no provision was made for the Protestant religion and that it was the duty of the House of Hanover and the King by his coronation oath to maintain the Protestant religion established by law. The legislative clause of the Act was repugnant to the principles

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[17] ***Oxford Magazine***, June 1774, 185.
[18] ***London Evening Post***, 14-16 June 1774.
[19] ***Ibid.***, 14-18 June 1774.

of a free Constitution. The petitioners then requested of his Majesty that "as the Guardian of the Laws, Liberties, and Religion of your People, and as the great Bulwark of the Protestant Faith" that he reject the Bill.[20] The King proceeded to the House of Lords where he gave his Royal Assent and stated that the bill "will, I doubt not, have the best effects in quieting the minds and promoting the happiness of my Canadian subjects."[21]

Before one concludes by the language of the Petition that there was a profound concern for the Protestant succession in Canada, the underlying factors which helped to shape the Petition need to be addressed. The mercantile community was partially behind the protest against the Bill, since the potential for further aggravation of the already poor trade with America was so high. Furthermore, the merchants of Quebec had requested the support of the London community through Francis Masères, the colony's representative. John Wilkes had been on the Committee appointed by the Common Council to write the petition. While Wilkes was one of many who helped to formulate the Petition, his leadership against the Bill committed radical opposition to seeking its downfall. His leadership in this issue raised his popularity in London. By October 1774, Wilkes was leading in the polls for the mayorship of London. [22]

Radical activity had been lively since the 1760's under the leadership of Wilkes.[23] By the 1770's it was focussed and organized around the cause of Protestant liberty in all its manifestations, civil, religious, property. Radicals cherished the principles of the Glorious Revolution and emphasized the importance of the balance of power between the Crown and Parliament agreed upon in the Revolution Settlement of 1689. To radicals, the North government's intervention in East India Company affairs in 1773 was a violation of the company's charter and showed a disregard for private property. Neither this nor the administration's American policy endeared the Ministry to the defenders of liberty. Rather, English radicals identified with the Americans' demand for the right to control their own internal taxation, and committed themselves to opposition to the "despotic" tendencies of the North

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[20] To the King's Most Excellent Majesty: The humble Address and Petition of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons of the City of London, in Common Council assembled. ***Hibernian Magazine***, July 1774, 404-05. Also found in the ***Oxford Magazine***, June1774, 185.

[21] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xvii,1407.

[22] Walpole to Mann, 6 October 1774, ***Horace Walpole's Coreespondence***, W.S. Lewis ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), vol. viii, 45.

[23] John Brewer established that "focussed radicalism" was a national phenomenon personified by John Wilkes during the 1760's. J. Brewer, ***Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III*** , (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), Chs. 1,9, 10-13.

government. The American crisis thus seemed to confirm the need for reform in Parliament as a defense against this despotism, a notion that was pursued in the general elections of 1774 by the radical candidates.

There are several reasons why the Quebec Act in particular drew the hostility of the English radicals. First, the Quebec Act followed the Coercive Acts. A correspondent to the ***London Evening Post*** so aptly pointed out that "who ever is a well-wisher to his king and country, must sincerely wish the Americans to resist the enforcing of the late acts of parliament." He further suggested that the Quebec Bill was perhaps a means on the part of the Ministry of enforcing obedience by the colonists, a tactic this correspondent believed would lose its "horror by repetition" and eventually sap away the liberties of English citizens. [24] In other words, radicals claimed that to accept the Quebec Act was to allow a precedent to be set for tyrannical government in North America and eventually in Great Britain. Second, as defenders of the British Constitution and of the principles of the Glorious Revolution, radicals viewed the Roman Catholic religion with suspicion. England had a history of bloody rebellions related to Catholicism, the last of which having been only thirty years before with the Young Pretender's defeat at Culloden in 1746. The Quebec Act exempted the Roman Catholic Canadians from the penal laws of England and the Oath of Allegiance expected of Catholics in Great Britain. The normal safeguards against popery, in other words, had been removed in Quebec, and the defenders of Protestantism felt vulnerable throughout the rest of the Empire. Catholicism was considered to be despotic in nature because the Pope claimed primacy above the King in Parliament. The alleged strength of the British Constitution was that it had obtained a balance between the government, the established Church and its people and in this way guaranteed the rights and liberties of Englishmen. Third, the Quebec Bill was one of the many "symptoms of the disease" made apparent by the North Ministry's corrupt tendencies in imperial and domestic government. The unwieldy power of the Governor and the council over the colony was taken to reveal the "despotic" tendencies of the Administration. The fact that the Administration did not grant an assembly seemed to suggest that Parliament was establishing a new form of colonial government, a rebuke to the form of government championed by the Americans. The fact that Catholicism was allowed over a large territory also served to bring into question the religious tendencies of the Administration.

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[24] ***London Evening Post***, 7-9 June 1774.

Radicalism also had a strong non-conformist core.[25] Protestant Dissenters were disturbed by the Act. Unlike radicals, Dissenters were bound by their common experience as religious outcasts which set them apart from other popular movements. They shared pro-American sentiment with the radicals as well as support for civil and religious liberty. While they staunchly upheld the notion of the Protestant succession of the Glorious Revolution, they were less than satisfied with the Act of Toleration which restricted their religious practices. The Quebec Act came after the failure of a campaign for relief for Protestant Dissenters from subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles in 1773. The Administration's religious tendencies combined with a coercive American policy had many Dissenters believing that the Act was dangerous to their American brothers and sisters and thus to their own cause.

Dissenters were also very anti-Catholic. The Archdeacon Francis Blackburne, in his pamphlet, ***A Collection of Letters and Essays in Favor of Public Liberty*** (London, 1774), claimed that:

> ...Clerics as well as laymen being enlisted must do the allotted duty. The Latter are to write up the Crown prerogative to the highest pitch, and the alliance requiring that the prerogative of the Church should rise in proportion, the scribes of the sacred order have it in their instructions to magnify their office, to exalt the Church above Gospel and to represent the apprehensions of danger to the Protestant Religion from the increase of Popery to be groundless and ridiculous. [26]

He further complained that the Quebec Act was an example of the "grand alliance, the combined powers of Church and State." This "grand alliance" was tyrannical by nature, because other interests were ignored, such as the Dissenters' relief, and because it gave too much power to government.

However, unlike the radicals, the Dissenters stood to benefit from the liberal religious policy granted to the Canadians by the Act:

> As your Majesty has given not only a protection, but a legal establishment to the Roman Catholics in the province of Quebec, we your Majesty's loyal subjects, the Protestant dissenting Ministers of this realm, now lying under the terror of penalties, fines and imprisonment, humbly hope, that a Protestant clergy shall not be found

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[25] Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke, ***The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790***, vol 1. (London: Her Majesty's Staionery Office, 1964), 116.

[26] In Richard Burgess Barlow, ***Citizenship and Conscience: a study in the theory and practice of religious toleration in England during the Eighteenth Century***, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), 137.

> less worthy of your Majesty's goodness ... in giving us that permanent, legal security for the exercise of our religion...[27]

The innovative religious policy of in the Quebec Act, especially since Dissenters viewed the Act as an establishment of Catholicism, was obviously noted by Protestant Dissenters who were still restricted by religious penal laws. The fact that Dissenters hoped that the tolerant spirit extended to the Roman Catholics of Quebec would bring about a similar policy for Dissenters in Great Britain is important when one argues that the Quebec Act had a trans-Atlantic quality. In other words, Dissenters made the important link between imperial policy and the implications that policy could have for domestic issues.

Radicals sought to profit from the Dissenters' hostility and suspicion toward the Act in the hopes that that group would support radical candidates at the elections. Radicals therefore stressed the importance of "Protestants of all denominations in these kingdoms, to take some effectual measures for the securing of their civil and religious liberties."[28] The emphasis placed on Protestantism as a single unit battling a common foe meant that radicalism offered the dissenting groups the potential for greater political control in the securing of their religious rights. It is therefore not surprising that many Dissenters were supported by radicals during the campaign for greater relief or that Dissenters represented the radical interest at the elections.

Because the radical interest was an important element to the opposition against the Quebec Act, newspapers may serve as a window onto the popular movement campaigning against the Act in the months following Royal Assent. Contemporary newspapers and journals do provide insight into the issues raised in the booming print culture of the time and its attempt to influence its readers in such contentious debates. The eighteenth-century press was an effective political tool used by politicians and by polemicists to educate its readership in current political concerns and therefore played its part in swaying public opinion. [29] By examining the print culture, one is able to evaluate the extent of the opposition to the Quebec Act and the types of arguments used in favor and against the policy. Pamphlets, which in general increased in number during the elections.[30] It was mainly through the medium of contemporary printed material that the Quebec Bill was made an issue of

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27 ***London Evening Post***, 25-28 June 1774.
28 ***London Evening Post***, 6-8 September 1774.
29 See J. Brewer, ***Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III***, 18.
30 ***Critical Review, or Annals of Literature, Monthly Review*** , July 1774, 77. Other lists of contemporary publications are found in ***Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal***, August 1774, 149-153; and in the ***Scots Magazine***, July 1774, 371.

public concern, a phenomenon which grew in the ensuing elections of 1774. The treatment of the Quebec Act in the Press was thus two fold. The more moderate journals and magazines tended to print very little either in favor or in opposition to the Quebec Act, while newspapers influenced by the radicals led the attack against the Act. Newspapers continued to report the Commons debates on the Bill and to print public opinion on the matter during the 1774 elections. Some were more judgmental in their reporting than others. No sooner had the debates in the House of Commons begun on 26 May 1774 when the Quebec Bill was reported in the ***London Evening Post*** as "the greatest stretch of power that has been ever attempted in this country."[31] The radical ***London Evening Post*** is rich with commentaries opposing the Quebec Act. Articles opposing the Act were printed daily in the ***London Evening Post*** from the period of the debates in the last session of Parliament to the closing of the elections.[32] It is probable that the newspaper's location in London both resulted from and fed radical activity which continued to be vibrant throughout the American crisis.[33]

While not offering a large pool of anti-Quebec Act literature, the ***Hibernian Magazine***, a Dublin paper, also published opposing views on the Act. From the ***Hibernian Magazine*** came the famous engraving of the "Mitred Minuet", the fantastic image of four bishops dancing a minuet to the bagpipes around the Quebec Bill and "the crossing of hands was to shew their approbation and countenance of the Roman religion."[34] In the case of the ***Hibernian Magazine***, disaffection may be traced more through its pro-American stance than with any association with English radicals. It is unlikely then that the editors of the ***Hibernian Magazine*** were trying to arouse the same kind of public response as were those of the ***London Evening Post***, the champion of English radical thought.

Moderate newspapers were inclined to wait for the final draft of the Bill before taking sides. The ***Town and Country Magazine***, a monthly journal, already noted the clamor arising from the Quebec Bill's establishment of the "Romish" religion in the province of Quebec in June 1774 and added that "we shall not [solely]

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[31] ***London Evening Post***, 24-26 May 1774.

[32] The ***London Evening Post*** was actually printed every other day but covered two days in each issue.

[33] By the 1770's, radicalism in general was spreading to other parts of England directly as a result of the publicity surrounding John Wilkes and the Middlesex scandal in 1768, and frequent contact with America. Pro-American sentiment was prevalent in port districts such as Bristol, another area of radical activity. Unfortunately for this study, no radical newspapers from Bristol or Middlesex were accessible.

[34] ***Hibernian Magazine***, August 1774, 451.

determine upon the merits of this bill, till we see the effects of it." [35] By July, the editors stated that there was little cause for opposition and that the patriots were under an illusion in apprehending that the constitution, either in Church or state, was in any imminent danger.[36] The ***Gentlemen's Magazine*** provided summary accounts of the debates and printed the petitions sent to Parliament . In July 1774, it also included an article on the "Vindication of the Quebec Bill" which claimed that the policy was just and expedient.

Headings such as "No Popery, No Slavery," "No Jacobite Cabinet, No Popish Parliament," unique to radical papers, appeared in the ***London Evening Post*** throughout the month of June. Emphasis was placed on the religious aspect of the Bill accusing the Ministry of attempting to re-institute jacobitism in English politics.[37] The anti-jacobite language that the radicals were adopting was rhetoric, deliberate in its purpose to chastise the government. The term jacobite had, however, lost its traditional sting of a threatened return of the Stuart monarchy.[38] Such language re-asserted revolutionary values, the importance of the King's coronation oath, and the impropriety of unbridled power in the hands of secretive Ministers and a misled Crown . Great care was taken not to offend the King, yet countless commentaries expressed shock about the audacity of such a Bill under a prince of the House of Hanover. However, frequent reminders were issued to the readers that the Crown had been given to that House by the people of England "for the purpose of preserving them from popery and arbitrary power."[39]

> Yet Blame not the King
> For this wicked thing,
> Nor peck at his Majesty's bacon;
> All good subjects hope,
> Tho' a friend to the Pope,
> He's not ill-inclin'd, but mistaken. [40]

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[35] ***Town and Country Magazine, or, Universal repository of Knowledge, instruction, and entertainment***, June 1774, 322.

[36] ***Town and Country Magazine***, July 1774, 388.

[37] Because many "Tories" had supported the hereditary succession of the House of Stuart in 1746, jacobitism became part of the"Tory" political image. The charge of jacobitism later became an effective political mechanism used by Whigs during the Walpolean era to undermine the opposition. Jacobitism as a scare mechanism or as a political tool to be used against the ruling elite had lost its effectiveness by the 1760's. See Linda Colley, ***In defiance of oligarchy: the Tory Party, 1714-60***, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1982).

[38] The Pretender was not considered to be a threat in 1774. The ***Chester Chronicle*** of 15 May 1775 claimed that the Pretender was a drunk and in a pathetic financial state.

[39] ***London Evening Post***, 14-16 June 1774.

[40] ***Ibid.***, 5-7 July 1774.

More harsh statements appeared in the same issue of this paper, claiming that "The Quebec government bill appears to be an act passed in favor of the abdicated family;... it is treason against the *King*, because that which establishes popery and tyranny in any part of the British dominions, does certainly tend to disestablish his Majesty's right to the crown: and it is treason against the *people*, as the establishment of popery and arbitrary power destroys the very principles of their free constitution, and tears up by the roots all their rights and liberties."[41] Other historical grievances resurfaced such as the alleged jacobite activity of the Earl of Bute which was projected onto the person of Lord Mansfield. Mansfield was accused by many contemporaries of being the secret author of the Quebec Bill. Mansfield was also a Scot and the fact that he had family members who had participated in the 1745 rebellion in favor of the Stuarts led many of his contemporaries to interpret his liberal opinions in religious affairs as jacobite activity.[42]

Contemporaries, particularly the radicals, emphasized the trans-Atlantic nature of the Quebec Act. It was argued that popery and slavery established abroad would return to enslave the English proper:

> Popish government here
> At first might seem queer,
> And put some wild head in a fury;
> But to Quebec granted,
> It may soon be transplanted,
> And one man be both Judge and Jury. [43]

Popery was portrayed as increasing throughout the Kingdom. Brief histories on the persecution of Protestants at the hands of Catholics were a recurrent theme, as well as the potential for a French Canadian army cutting the throats of the Protestant colonies.[44] A warning was issued to the Protestant Irish that "the Catholics will necessarily migrate to whatever part of the empire their religion is not only tolerated but encouraged by law."[45] The correspondent to the ***London Evening Post*** tried to stir up the fears of the Protestant Irish by claiming that French Canadians would migrate to Ireland in order to be with their Catholic brethren. It was further surmised that " that gentlemen openly professing the Popish religion, will offer themselves as candidates for Members of Parliament at the approaching general election, because

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[41] ***Ibid.***, 5-7 July 1774.
[42] Edward Foss, ***Judges of England***, vol. 3, (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 345.
[43] ***London Evening Post***, 5-7 July 1774.
[44] ***Ibid.***, 16-18 August 1774.
[45] ***Ibid.***, 5-7 July 1774.

persons of that religion have been admitted, by order of government, into the legislative power abroad in other of our colonies besides Canada."[46] Opposition to the Quebec Act expanded to include the Ministry's policy toward Grenada since the 1760's which had by Royal Proclamation allowed French Catholics to practice as they had under French occupation. The radicals appealed to the sensibilities of the public, counting on the burgeoning of a Protestant patriotism to oppose the government in the forthcoming elections.

One pamphleteer opted to clarify the meaning of patriotism for the purpose of the elections, which "has even sunk down to contempt, and is become the scorn and the by-word of the very rabble." He attempted to make clear to the voters who the patriots really were by emphasizing that patriotism was not necessarily rebellion.[47] He attacked the goals of the Wilkes movement as false, accusing radicals of "sounding the alarm when there is none." The pamphleteer then argued in favor of the government's Quebec policy that "if liberty of conscience be a natural right, we have no power to with-hold it; if it be an indulgence, it may be allowed to Papists, while it is not denied to other sects." In other words, the author considered the Act of Toleration of William III's reign to be an indulgence which granted Protestant Dissenters the freedom to exercise their religion without penalty. A candidate of patriotism was one who loved the people, who reminded them frequently of their rights, and who stimulated them to resent encroachments, and to multiply securities. He was not one who raised false hopes or disturbed the peace of his country. It was the author's hope that the nation recover from its delusion, and unite in a general abhorrence of those who have "gathered round them whatever the kingdom can supply of base, and gross, and profligate."

Radicals also did their utmost to aid and encourage the public to participate in the elections.[48] Radicals made several addresses to the electors of Great Britain, encouraging popular discretion in the selection of candidates because "your liberties, properties, and religion, in a great measure depend on those who represent you in parliament."[49] An address was made to the Protestant Dissenters urging them to select candidates who were attached to their civil and religious liberties. The pamphlet reminded the Dissenters of the "strenuous opposition made by their

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46 ***Ibid.***, 30 June- 2 July 1774.
47 "The Patriot. Addressed to the electors of Great Britain," ***Scots Magazine***, October 1774, 535-539.
48 The term public or public opinion, as used in this study, refers to the reading public and those who were outside the political center and who were informed of national policy debates.
49 "A seasonable address to the Electors of Great Britain--not unapplicable to those of Ireland." ***Hibernian Magazine***, June 1774, 341-342.

ancestors to the encroachments of arbitrary power" and asked them to remember those men who obstructed the success of the late application to Parliament as enemies to the religion of the Dissenters. The second part of the pamphlet asked for Dissenter support for the American cause on the issue of taxation. The pamphlet concluded with the words: "The choice of proper men for representative is the common cause of all; and while we maintain unanimity in the preservation of our civil rights, we have nothing now to dread from the intolerant views of religious prejudices." [50]

The names of those who voted in the Commons for the Quebec Bill in June 1774 were published both in June and in October in the ***London Evening Post*** . Candidates as well as voters were thus able to attack their opponents on whether or not they had supported or had stood silent on the Quebec Act.[51] Radicals included the repeal of the Quebec Act in their platforms, as well as the promise to uphold civil and religious liberty. In a speech at a meeting of the freeholders of the County of Kent, John Sawbridge stated that "there are two sets of political principles in this county, *whiggism* and *toryism.* The principles of whiggism are a love of civil and religious liberty, and an attachment to equal and legal government." He further encouraged the freeholders to select candidates who would vote for the repeal of the Quebec government bill, and to support another bill , "in which the Protestant religion, and a free form of government, are established."[52] The City of London also decided on a pledge which candidates were to sign before being elected as representatives for the House of Commons. "No Popery Members. No Unrepealers of the Quebec and Boston Acts. And let the Electors all over the Kingdom be conjured to **Reject** at their Nomination Meetings every Candidate who refuses to Subscribe similar Conditions with those of LONDON, Middlesex, Westminister, and Southwark." appeared as a Post headline in October.[53] As in London, those who did not sign were attacked in the press.

Religion was thus brought forward as an issue at the polls. There is no evidence revealing to what degree religion actually influenced the voters. In districts

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[50] "An Address to Protestant Dissenters of all Denominations, on the approaching Election of Members of Parliament, with Respect to the State of Public Liberty in General, and of American Affairs in particular," ***Critical Review***, September 1774, 232-3.

[51] "Let me ask that paragon of virtue and independence, Sir Thomas, what were his sentiments on the Quebec and Boston Port bills? Did he give his voice against either? No; but like a betrayer of his trust, unacquainted by public virtue, he shamefully coincided with the treaterous designs of the most abandoned Minister that ever involved a Sovereign in indeligible desgrace." Found in "To the Independent Freeholders of the County of Durham," ***London Evening Post***, 1-3 September 1774.

[52] ***Hibernian Magazine***, October 1774, 611-612.

[53] ***London Evening Post***, 4-6 October 1774. Similar versions of this heading were printed in 17-20 Sept. and Sept. 29-Oct 1774.

where the Quebec Act was made an issue, other issues were of equal or of greater importance. In many instances, the American crisis was the leading issue of public concern particularly in the areas of strongest radical activity -- London, Middlesex, Westminster, and Bristol. John Wilkes and John Glynn, both advocates of reform and both pro-Americans, swept Middlesex, a circumstance that was not surprising since Wilkes was the "monarch" of London, Westminster and Middlesex. Both Wilkes and Glynn had made the repeal of the Quebec Act part of their overall plan for "the security of our excellent constitution, and the restoration of the rights and liberties of our fellow subjects in America."[54] Radical success in the elections was also evident in London, where two out of four seats went to Wilkite supporters (Frederick Bull, George Hayley), one to John Sawbridge, an independent radical, and one to Richard Oliver who regularly supported Opposition.[55] On the other hand, Constantine John Phipps who, although not a radical himself, was representing the radical interest at Newcastle-on-Tyne, lost to government supporters in spite of his attacks against the Quebec Act. Interestingly enough, Newcastle-on-Tyne had demonstrated support for the petition of 1769 on behalf of Wilkes and the Middlesex election and was considered to have a strong radical component. Yet, while there may have been strong radical sentiment, local issues rather than national issues tended to draw the most concern.[56] Although not a radical district, the candidates for Milborne Port, Charles Wolseley and Temple Luttrell, both deplored the Administration's American policy. They argued that the Administration's American policy would lead to civil war and Wolseley in particular claimed that the Quebec Act was "shocking to the feelings of humanity" because it "empowered the Catholics to persecute."[57]

The Dissenters supporting the radical campaign tended to raise the most opposition to the Quebec Act. Frederick Bull, fourth in the London polls, clearly promoted the repeal of the Quebec Act throughout his campaign. In addition he made the repeal of the Act part of the candidates' pledge to serve the city of London. John Glynn, who ran with Wilkes in the Middlesex elections, had much to do with the program's stress on religious liberty. There is no proof, however, that Glynn spoke out against the Quebec Act.

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54 "Historical Chronicle," ***Hibernian Magazine***, October 1774.

55 L. Namier and J. Brooke, ***The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790***, vol. 1, 76.

56 ***Ibid***., vol. 1, 77. See also Thomas R. Knox, "Popular Politics and Provincial Radicalism: Newcastle Upon T yne, 1769-1785," ***Albion,*** vol. II (1979), 224-241.

57 Cited in L. Namier and J. Brooke, ***The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790***, vol. 1, 76.

Candidates encountered the most hostility to the Quebec Act at the Bristol and Cambridge elections. The contest at Bristol between Edmund Burke and Henry Cruger, an avid radical, was intense. While neither of the candidates were Dissenters, Burke, who had been supported primarily by Quaker merchants, was able to win the secondary votes of Henry Cruger who had been supported by Methodists and who was at the top of the poll. Burke's nomination speech, as a Rockingham supporter, dealt primarily with the American problem. The Quebec Act, however, was a matter of much criticism from the government's opponents during the elections. Burke was therefore forced to address the Quebec Act as an issue. Criticism might be linked to the fact that two dissenting groups gave their support to the candidates, and therefore made the religious clause of the Quebec Act a primary issue of concern.

At Cambridge, a district with a large dissenting population, Soame Jenyns and Charles Sloane Cadogan, both government supporters, defeated Thomas Plumer Byde and Samuel Meeke, both representing the radical interest. Byde and Meeke had pledged to "oppose the Government's American policy and to support an enlarged toleration of Protestant Dissenters and a more equal representation in Parliament."[58] When the non-conformists' candidates did not win, the supporters of Byde and Meeke turned into an angry mob, breaking the windows of the Aldermen " who had voted away their liberties". For their safety "Jennings" was rolled home in a sugar cask and Cadogan escaped "dressed in the woman cook's cloaths." Cadogan had appeared on the list of members who had divided for the Quebec Bill, a fact which was held against him in the polls. He came second to Jenyns in 1774 where he had preceded Jenyns in the 1761, 1764, and 1768 elections.[59]

The elections of 1774 then made the Quebec Act a national issue, often as an issue of liberty associated with the American Crisis. Furthermore, the 1774 elections were unique; according to Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke, there was a greater desire to enter Parliament in 1774 than at any other general election between 1754-1790. [60] Participation may be attributed to the anti-administration sentiment arising from the Ministry's coercive American policy. In fact, the elections provided radicals with the opportunity to challenge the Administration's American policy and to address the issues raised by the Wilkes' petitioning movement in 1769. The phenomenon known as Wilkism attacked the parliamentary exclusion of upper classes and

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[58] "An Extract of a letter from Cambridge, Oct. 9" in ***London Evening Post,*** 8-11 October 1774.
[59] L. Namier and J. Brooke, ***The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790***, vol. 1, 218.
[60] ***Ibid.***, vol. 1, 77.

therefore membership took on a new appeal for a wider class of candidates. The coordination of the radicals, as well as their expanding influence, alarmed the Administration who maintained their majority at Westminster. The radicals, the Opposition and the Administration scrambled for candidates to challenge their opponents at the elections. Organized campaigning and party politicking were pioneering aspects of the elections of 1774.

After the 1774 electdions, the criticism of the Quebec Act changed in emphasis. Instead, critics sought to explain the implications of the Quebec Act either as an imperial issue or as a constitutional matter facing Britain. In both political and theological discussion, civil and religious liberty were thus presented as being fundamentally connected; this practice had been common during the elections. The language used of the Church being in danger and references made about the 'common enemy' convinced Churchmen and Dissenters alike that there was a possible revival of Toryism in their midst.[61] Critics in the ***London Evening Post*** in 1775 claimed that the Church was "prostituted" by the Administration; Canadian Roman Catholics would descend on the American colonists and the eventual "encouragement" of Catholicism in America would lead to Toryism and principles of persecution in England.[62]

The fear of Toryism compounded with the potential for civil war refueled criticism of the Quebec Act in 1775 and may have encouraged and expanded anti-Catholic sentiment. Contemporaries began to compare the American situation and the danger of enslavement by the Roman Catholic Canadians to England's vulnerability by the apparent imbalance between Catholicism and Protestantism in England. It was argued by radicals and Dissenters that a decay of the Protestant dissenting spirit would lead to the loss of British liberty. The author of a letter to the ***London Evening Post*** ended his argument with this quotation from Hume: "the precious spark of liberty had been kindled, and was preserved by the Puritans alone; and to this sect the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution."[63] Anti-Catholic sentiment aroused by the Quebec Act may have awakened more popular support for Dissenters than what had been the case in the early 1770's when they were seeking relief from the subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles.

There is evidence, however, to suggest that the Administration viewed the Dissenters with the same kind of suspicion as the American colonists. Because the

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[61] J. E. Bradley, ***Religion, Revolution, and English Radicalism***, 387.
[62] ***London Evening Post***, 10-12 October, 21-4 and 7-9 November 1775. Cited in J. E. Bradley, ***Religion, Revolution, and English Radicalism***, 387.
[63] ***London Evening Post***, 22-24 November 1774.

Dissenters were pro-American and had championed the radical cause during the elections, it is possible that the Administration had a more favorable outlook on Roman Catholics since the latter pledged their allegiance and support to the Administration. The Dissenters' relief program was thus not reconsidered by the Administration until 1779, when the threat of war with France and Spain, two Catholic nations, intensified anti-Catholic sentiment in England.

The parliamentary experience, however, was different from the religious and political discussion occupying the dissenting populace. Once the papers from General Gage on the American reaction to the Acts of the last session were read in Parliament on 19 January 1775, Opposition members opposed the Quebec Act on the grounds that it was an Intolerable Act rather than for its lenient religious provisions.[64] Opposition to the Quebec Act then became part of a general resistance to Tory policy in American affairs. The attempted repeal in 1775 in both Houses of Parliament reveals that the Opposition continued to cross party lines on the Quebec Act as it had in 1774, [65] but was more characterized in 1775 by its common policy of conciliation with the Americans. That is to say that Opposition members in both Houses voted in a similar fashion in 1775 as they had in 1774, with the sole purpose of appeasing the Americans rather than for any inherent flaws in the Act. The Lords motion was defeated 28 to 88 and the Commons bill was rejected 86 to 174. [66]

The context for repeal of the Quebec Act in 1775 is varied. While there had been a consensus in the last Parliament that parliamentary authority was supreme "in all cases whatsoever" and that the colonists were acting like rebellious children, the worsening situation with America divided opinion in Parliament on the policy to be adopted. In response to the news from General Gage, the Ministry proposed more legislation and prepared to quell the disturbances in America by the use of force.[67] During the months of February and March, the Ministry and the King suggested the augmentation of the forces already in America and put forward a ***Bill for restraining the Trade and Commerce of the New England Colonies***, which preceded the

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[64] See the engraving "America In Flames"in the ***Hibernian Magazine,*** January 1775 for a popular view of the Quebec Act as an aggravating factor in the American dispute. The scene portrays the Quebec Bill and the Massachusetts Bay inflaming America while the King, holding the Boston Port Bill looks on.

[65] P. Lawson, ***Imperial Challenge***, 147.

[66] ***Journals of the House of Lords***, vol. xxxiv, 458. See ***Journals of the House of Commons***, vol. xxxv, 385. See also W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xviii, 676 and 684.

[67] In letter to Hon. Henry Seymour Conway on 22 January 1775, Horace Walpole wrote: "The Cabinet have determined on civil war and regiments are going from Ireland and our West Indian Islands. On Thursday the plan of the war is to be laid before both Houses." Mrs. Paget Toynbee, ed., ***Letters of Horace Walpole,*** vol. 9, (Oxford, 1903), 150.

restraining bills of March, restricting trade and commerce to New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina. By May of 1775, Parliament had begun to examine the army estimates and extraordinaries for the financing of British forces should war break out in America or with France and Spain.[68]

The policy pursued by the Ministry as well as the news from Gage confirmed for many of the Opposition the need for a plan of conciliation with America rather than the use of force. Where the measures of the last session could be justified on the grounds that Parliament had to exercise some authority over the colonies who appeared to be refuting Parliament's supremacy in the Empire, the measures of the new session were more extreme, likely to provoke resistance rather than any resolution to the dispute. The Rockingham Whigs [69] had always supported some kind of conciliation with the American colonies but could not compromise the supremacy of Parliament established by the Declaratory Act of which they had been the authors in 1766. In September 1775, Rockingham wrote Burke: "our friends should resist in both Houses of Parliament--the address or whatever measure is proposed by the ministers, which tends to commit Parliament in approving what has passed, or which tends to encourage the continuance of the hostile measure towards America."[70] The Rockingham group intended to adopt a plan to resist the Ministry's American policy. The Chathamites and the Shelburne followers, the radical component of the Opposition, had defended the rights of the American colonists and had opposed the American Bills of the last session. On 1 February 1775, Chatham had prepared a Provisional Act for settling the troubles in America which asked for the suspension of the Quebec Act and the Coercive Acts of 1774 as had been stated in the Continental Congress resolutions.[71] While Lord Lyttelton and the Duke of Grafton both came to the defense of the Quebec Bill, no other member of the Opposition who spoke in favor of Chatham's resolutions included the Quebec Bill in their discussion. A second opposition attempt for conciliation was made by Edmund Burke on 22 March 1775. Burke's conciliatory attempt recommended the repeal of the Boston Port Act of 1774, thus differing considerably from Chatham's earlier

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[68] See for example, Lord Rochford to the King, 21 April 1775, ***The Correspondence of King George the Third***, vol. iii, 206. See also, Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, 7 May, ***Letters of Horace Walpole***, Mrs. Paget Toynbee, ed., vol. 9, 190.

[69] The Duke of Richmond, the Duke of Portland, and the Cavendish and Fox families also had their own followings while maintaining close ties with Rockingham. See Frank O'Gorman, ***The Rise of Party in England; the Rockingham Whigs, 1760-82***, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975).

[70] John A. Wood, ed., ***The Correspondence of Edmund Burke***, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1963; hereafter cited as ***Burke's Correspondence***), vol. iii, 204-05.

[71] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xviii, 202.

proposals. While Burke did not raise the Quebec Act as an issue, he did discuss the religious preference of the colonists and explained their temperament toward liberty as stemming from their dissenting tradition. He further argued that: "I think it is nearly as little in our power to change their republican religion, as their free descent; or to substitute the Roman Catholic, as a penalty; or the church of England, as an improvement." [72] Burke pressed the need to "sacrifice some civil liberties, for the advantages to be derived from the communion and fellowship of a great empire."[73]

Also in the first few months of 1775, there was a general increase in the number of petitions sent to Parliament from British merchants requesting conciliation and the repeal of the Coercive Acts which were aggravating the American colonies. On 23 and 26 January, the Merchants of London and Bristol sent petitions requesting a solution to the dispute for the sake of trade and commerce with the colonies. The Opposition also presented to the House of Commons on 2 February a petition from the West India Planters respecting the American non-importation agreements. The Opposition became accustomed to bringing before Parliament the petitions of American sympathizers.

It was in this context of preparation for war and pro-American activities of English merchants and Opposition politicians that Lord Camden and Sir George Savile presented on 17 and 18 May 1775 the ***Petition of his Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects settled in the province of Quebec*** and brought forward their bills for repeal of the Quebec Act. The Petition upon which the repeal attempts were justified had been sent to London by the British merchants in Quebec. The Old Subjects asked Parliament to reconsider the unhappy state of British subjects deprived of the rights of *habeas corpus* and trial by jury and government by strange laws, "disgraceful to us as Britons and in their consequences ruinous to our properties."[74] The merchants also referred to the fact that "four parts in five of all the imports and exports" were in British hands. "The British subjects here have been grossly abused and misrepresented, as well as to their numbers as in their importance in this province."[75] The Petition of the merchants of Quebec requested the repeal of the Act for economic reasons. Lord Camden and Sir George Savile, both American sympathizers, used the Petition as a stepping stone in order to disparage the Act

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[72] ***Ibid.***, vol. xviii, 502.
[73] ***Ibid.***, vol. xviii, 527.
[74] "Petitions for the Repeal of the Quebec Act. To the King's Most Excellent Majesty", A. Shortt and A. G. Doughty, eds., ***Canadian Archives Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada***, 414.
[75] ***Ibid.***, 418.

through legal grounds as part of a larger plan of conciliation with the Americans. According to Savile's biographer, however, Savile had never been pleased with the religious provisions, although he did not oppose them publicly in 1774.[76]

What is curious about the debates on the bills for repeal is the fact that the discussion of the same issues which had been contentious and heated in 1774 was listless in 1775. Lord Camden employed the language of the radical candidates as well as the points of opposition espoused by the Earl of Chatham in his speech for repeal in the Lords on 17 May 1775. Lord Camden raised the contentious issues of the 1774 debate in order to rally support against the Act. Camden opposed the Act under three headings: "The extension of the limits of Quebec, The establishment of Popery there and the civil despotism in which the inhabitants of that immensely extended province are to be perpetually bound..." According to the ***Chester Chronicle*** Camden's speech had lasted an hour and a half "and in eloquence of expression, in manly, liberal, and philanthropic sentiments, in knowledge of the laws and constitution of our country, and in force of reason and argument, equalled any that was ever delivered within those walls."[77] Contrary to the enthusiasm of this journal, few Opposition members spoke in favor of the bill for repeal and the debate ended quickly, moving on to a longer discussion of Spanish armament before dividing in the negative on Camden's bill.

There tended to be consistency of voting between 1774 and 1775. Opposition members who had opposed the Act in 1774 for specific reasons tended to vote for a repeal in 1775 with the same reasons in mind. The Duke of Richmond discussed the potential arbitrary powers of the Governor of Quebec without committing himself to the religious implications of Camden's speech. His lack of acknowledgment of the religious overtones of Camden's speech suggests that he was responding on behalf of his Rockingham connection, which had not opposed the Act for its religious provisions in 1774. Similarly, the Earl of Shelburne chose to scorn the Ministry's proposal to arm the French Canadians and, for similar reasons, did not respond to Camden's religious claims against the Act. Shelburne, however, did not vote for repeal of the Quebec Act.

However, some did change sides between 1774 and 1775. Lord Hillsborough, former secretary of state for the colonies, had opposed the Act in 1774 because the Act set a new boundary that would hamper Protestant settlement and ruin Indian

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[76] George Ralph Elliot, ***Sir George Savile: The Career of an Independent Country Gentleman in Eighteenth-Century England***, Ph.D dissertation (University of Toronto, 1977), 303.
[77] ***Chester Chronicle***, 29 May 1775.

trade. Hillsborough did not speak during the repeal attempt nor did he vote for Camden's bill. Lord Sandys did not vote against the Act in 1775 as he had done in 1774. Another curious voting occurrence was the position taken by two bishops, Exeter and St. Asaph, who did not vote against the repeal of the Quebec Act, even after the Archbishop of Canterbury had denied that the Popish religion was established in Canada. [78] It is clear that not all the bishops agreed with the Archbishop of Canterbury's position on the Quebec Act.

The repeal attempt in the Commons on 18 May 1775 by Sir George Savile was less centered on religious issues, although Colonel Barré, a radical, made religious suggestions during the debate.[79] Savile's complaint was that *habeas corpus* had been excluded from the Act's provisions and he disapproved of the Ministry employing French Papists in the military. Another radical, Thomas Townshend, maintained along with Colonel Barré that the Act was "unjust, impolitic, and unconstitutional." Thomas Howard, who was listed as a Tory, continued to oppose the Act in the same manner as 1774 when he labeled the Act "this most tyrannous proposition...to introduce slavery and oppression into the colonies."[80] Charles James Fox did however use sharper language against the Act, considering he had voted for it in 1774. Fox alluded to the former charge questioning the "real planner" of the bill. He accused the Ministry of withholding an assembly from the Canadians and of having sanctioned the bill because of the dispute with the American colonies.[81]

The failure to repeal the Act in 1775 by either of the two Houses thus stemmed from the fact that the Opposition did not coalesce into uniform opposition against government. Fitzmaurice described the Opposition's organization in the early months of 1775: that there were occasions when 'the eloquence of Burke had vied with that of Chatham, the learning of Dunning with that of Camden, in denouncing the unconstitutional character of the proposals of the Government...But there was neither real concert nor lasting union." [82] The ***Town and Country Magazine*** observed that the "government seems resolved to persist in their intentions with respect to America; and notwithstanding the several motions that have been made in both houses for repealing the acts that displease the Americans, they turn a deaf ear to

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[78] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xviii, 676.
[79] Barré referred to the "Comptroller's white wand". William Meredith replied that "whatever magic power it might contain, it was no weapon of defence." ***Ibid.***, vol. xviii, 683.
[80] L. Namier and J. Brooke, ***The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790***, vol. 2, 647.
[81] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xviii, 682.
[82] Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, ***Life of William Earl of Shelburne afterwards First Marquess of Landsowne***, (London 1875-76) vol. 1, 477.

these proposals, and constantly divided the houses with a considerable majority against them."[83] Another reason for failure was that the language used by Camden and the religious implications of his speech were ineffective in garnering support. Old core Whigs may have found the extremism of radical rhetoric repugnant ever since the display at the elections of 1774. Consequently, Rockingham and his supporters did not openly support Camden's position during the debates in the Lords.

The last part of this repeal drama was played out four years later. The repeal attempt of 1778 was part of another Opposition plan to appease the Americans. The bill for repeal evolved out of the Opposition's general concern for the "present state of the nation." By 1778, the American war for independence that became a financial and military nightmare. The war with France and Spain also aggravated the situation for England. In an address to Parliament "On the state of the nation," Charles Fox declared that "the resources in men and money thus failing us, the conclusion naturally is, that there must be some sort of negotiation." Fox then claimed that the Quebec Act had served to "irritate and provoke," the colonists. In an even greater departure from his 1775 stand against the Act, Fox argued that "the passing of that act at that time had the same effect that, for instance, the repeal of the test-act would have had in K. William's time: for however great a friend I am to universal toleration, I should certainly have been against it at that time, because it would have disobliged one party, more than it would have served another; it would have joined a great body of Tories to the enemies of the Revolution, which were already sufficiently numerous."[84]

On 10 April 1778, Governor Johnston, one of the peace commissioners to be sent to America, argued that the Quebec Act and the Declaratory Law should be repealed for the success of the peace negotiations.[85] The repeal of the Declaratory Act would permit a new kind of relationship with the colonies that was different from the notion that colonial dependency and Parliamentary supremacy in "all cases whatsoever" were the sole principles upon which empire should be based. The Quebec Act too established a form of government that ran counter to the form of government championed by the Americans. Savile, Fox, Harbord and Burke all supported Thomas Powys' motion offering support to the declaration of American

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83 "Domestic Intelligence", ***Town and Country Magazine***, May 1775.
84 "Parliament: On the state of the nation", ***Scots Magazine***, September 1778, 473.
85 "Powys' Motion for declaring the Americans independent", W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xviv, 1086.

independence.[86] As early as 25 March 1778, Lord North in a dispatch to the King stated that he did not plan to include the Quebec Bill as part of the treaty or preliminary, "and about which the utmost that can be said is that it may be reconsider'd and amended, if found defective."[87]

On 14 April 1778, Savile again moved for the Repeal of the Quebec Government Bill arguing that the Americans considered the Quebec Act to be part of the chain intended to enslave them. He claimed that the Act was "inimical to their liberties both from the discordant seeds of religion and government, which it was to sow between them and the inhabitants of Canada, and from its evident object in extending the limits of that province beyond its former bounds." The Americans would not listen to "any terms of accommodation" as long as the Act was unrepealed.[88] Another aspect of Savile's charge against the Act was that Old and New subjects were dissatisfied with the form of government and laws established in Quebec.[89] Savile was supported by Thomas Townshend who had also seconded the repeal bill of 1775.

The division on the bill for repeal was no more impressive in 1778 (54 Yeas: 96 Noes) than in 1775 (86 Yeas: 174 Noes). [90] Why were both repeal attempts so unsuccessful? In part, the North Administration had majority support in 1775 despite the clamorous opposition of the more radical politicians. By 1778, however, the historian P.D.G Thomas contends that the North Administration was losing support as well as the majority in Parliament because of the handling of the war.[91] It is therefore conceivable that most parliamentarians saw the merits of the Act as an effective and just form of imperial policy. While Opposition politicians argued that the Act was one of the causes of the dispute with the Americans, there were just as many politicians for whom the American War emphasized the need for some form of government in the colony. Because the Americans had invaded Quebec in 1775, George Howard, who had voted for repeal in 1775, did not vote for the repeal in 1778

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[86] "Lord North to the King, April 10 1778," Sir John Fortescue, ed., ***The Correspondence of King George the Third***, vol. 4, 103-04.

[87] "Lord North to the King, March 25 1778,"***Ibid.***, vol. 4, 76.

[88] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xviv, 1127.

[89] "To the Rt. Hon. Lord George Germaine, one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, The Petition of the Merchants and such inhabitants of the Province of Quebec as are at present in London," in ***Scots Magazine***, April 1778, 216-17. What is interesting is the comment made by Thomas Townshend that there was no petition before the house where there had been a petition in 1775. W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xviv, 1130.

[90] ***Journals of the House of Commons***, vol. xxxvi, 923 and vol. xxxv, 385.

[91] Thomas claims that during the 1778 session of Parliament, the Administration majority on America dropped significantly from about 150 to 80 or 90 of its supporting members. See P.D.G. Thomas, ***Lord North***, (London: Allen Lane Penguin Books Ltd, 1976), 116.

on the grounds that a repeal would lose the province to the Americans. The failure of the repeal of 1778 also had more to do with the fact that, according to Lord North: "The House had been taken up so long in the Committee upon the recruiting Bill that Sr. George did not make his motion till half an hour after six, and the debate ended suddenly about eight o'clock before several persons who intended to be present could arrive at the House."[92]

Nor did the attempts at repeal made by Lord Camden and Sir George Savile reveal any prevalent anti-Catholic sentiment. Had members of Parliament been moved by anti-Catholic spirit, it is conceivable that the repeal attempt made by Lord Camden and Sir George Savile would have prompted the same kind of heated discussion as the debates of 1774. It is therefore probable that the American War dissipated religious concerns and thus secularized discussion. The Administration in turn learned from the Quebec Act that religious issues could be sacrificed for the purpose of Empire.

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92 "Lord North to the King, April 14, 1778," Sir John Fortescue, ed., ***The Correspondence of King George the Third***, vol. 4, 110.

Chapter II
Roman Catholic relief: The domestic challenge in 1778

One month following the attempted repeal of the Quebec Act of 14 April 1778, Sir George Savile moved to bring in a bill for relieving his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects from certain penalties and disabilities imposed on them by the Act of the 11th and 12th of William III, intitled, "An Act for the further preventing the 'growth of Popery.'"[1] This Act restricted the preaching and teaching of priests and the education of children, who, if caught attending a school abroad, would be forfeited to the Protestant next of kin. Catholics were also prevented from acquiring property. Savile's repeal motion would enable Roman Catholic priests to practice without the threat of imprisonment and allow Roman Catholics to inherit land in both Wales and England provided that the Roman Catholic heir took an oath of allegiance.[2]

Savile stated that one of his principal reasons for supporting the repeal of the Act of William III's reign was to "assert the principles of the Protestant religion, to which all persecution was, or ought to be, wholly adverse." He further argued that the Bill did not interfere with the vast body of that penal code, but that he had selected the Act as the basis upon which most prosecutions had been formed. While the Act was rarely invoked, Savile pointed to the fact that Roman Catholics feared "the consequence of the powers given by it." He also stressed the demonstrations of loyalty on behalf of Roman Catholics to the Government and to the throne as a reason for granting some relief. To accompany the repeal of the Act and "as a further guard and security, however, against any possible consequence of the measure, " Savile recommended that there be a test which would bind Catholics to the support of the civil government by law established.[3] After little debate in the House of Commons, the Bill passed its first and second reading without a division. The Bill then passed in the Lords on 28 May 1778 with the additional condition that priests take an oath of allegiance.[4] Alongside the discussion of English Catholic relief, a motion was made by Lord Richard Cavendish for repealing two Acts of Queen Anne I, one for favoring the purchase by Protestants of forfeited estates in Ireland and the other for advancing

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[1] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xix, 1137.
[2] ***Journals of the House of Commons***, vol. xxxvi, 978 ,985, 986 ,989, 998, 1005.
[3] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xix,1139.
[4] ***Journals of the House of Lords***, vol. xxxv, 513. Burke explains that "[the Bishops] might not appear to let a Bill about religion pass without having something to do with it." Edmund Burke to Edmund Secton Pery, 2 June 1778, ***Burke's Correspondence***, John A. Wood, ed., vol. iii, 452.

the sale of forfeited estates in Ireland.[5] These Bills along with a series of Irish Bills received Royal Assent on 3 June 1778.[6] After having given his Royal Assent to the Bills, the King in his closing speech thanked Parliament for having attended to the "real interests of all [his] subjects, in the wise, just, and humane laws" which he hoped "will be attended with the most salutary effects in every part of the British Empire."[7]

The Relief Bill of 1778 is a clear indication of the tolerant principles espoused by many members of Parliament who had the confidence to pass liberal policy upon the conviction that relief was just and expedient. The toleration of Catholicism abroad by the Quebec Act opened up new possibilities for Catholics at home. While the Catholic question was a dubious issue in 1774, the crisis in Ireland and dissenting activity over toleration stimulated discussion of the relaxation of the penal laws. A discussion of the Catholic question in British politics will reveal in the pages that follow that it was generally agreeable and desirable that toleration be a fundamental principle of the British Government.

Savile's Bill was the first proposal since the reign of William III to revise the penal code for the Roman Catholics, allowing them the freer exercise of their religion and greater control over their property. The Bill was a pioneering piece of legislation in that members of the Opposition and the Catholic community worked together to produce an agreeable oath which maintained the integrity of the religion while consolidating a form of policy that would be acceptable before Parliament. The Bill did not produce much opposition within Parliament nor any of the opposition displayed in England during the elections of 1774 on the Quebec Act. One contemporary observed that "no Catholic who recollects the passing of the Bill will ever forget the general anxiety of the body, while it was in its progress through Parliament; or the smile and friendly greeting with which his Protestant neighbor met him the day after it had passed into Law"[8] The ***Annual Register*** also recorded the event as follows:

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[5] ***Journals of the House of Commons***, xxxvi, 983,985,992, 1007.

[6] The Irish Bills refer to the following: Bill for allowing the exportation of certain enumerated goods directly from Ireland to any of the British plantations in America, or any of the British settlements on the coast of Africa; Bill to allow the free importation of cotton yarn manufactured in Ireland into any of the British ports. The ***Town and Country Magazine*** lists the two relief Bills as though they were part of the Irish Bills. See ***Town and Country Magazine***, August 1778.

[7] ***Scots Magazine***, June 1778, 318.

[8] Charles Butler, ***Historical Memoirs of the English, Irish, and Scottish Catholics since the Reformation***, 4 vols. (London: John Murray, 1822), 3:294, in Joan Connell, ***The Roman Catholic Church in England 1780-1850: A Study in Internal Politics***, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984), 52.

> The lateness of the session did not prevent Sir George Saville [sic] from endeavouring to profit of the lenient temper and liberal spirit of the times... The motion was received with universal approbation, and a bill was accordingly brought in and passed without a single negative by which a considerable body of our fellow-citizens were relieved from the pressure of some of the most intolerable of those grievances under which they had long laboured.[9]

The greatest noise against the English Relief Bill came from the Presbyterians of Scotland, reacting to the suggestion made by the lord advocate, Henry Dundas, that a similar policy would be proposed in Scotland. The ***Annual Register***, however, took no note of the violence which broke out in Edinburgh and Glasgow in its account of the year's events and proceedings. Rather, its writer, most likely Edmund Burke, described the event as sound policy despite the commotion stirring in Scotland.

The ease with which Savile's Bill passed through the British Parliament and the lack of public response raises some questions about the origins of Catholic relief in Britain in 1778. Historians in general have looked to Ireland and Scotland for answers. Joan Connell in a brief survey of the Catholic Church in England between 1780-1850 discusses the legal similarities of Irish Catholic relief with Savile's Bill.[10] Her assumptions are that English Relief evolved out of Britain's Irish policy extending from the early 1770's and was therefore a measure of expediency to meet the growing Irish problem. Because the oath embodied in Savile's Bill was practically a repetition of the Irish Oath of 1774, the English Bill of 1778 offered little relief to the Roman Catholics who were then expected to make extraordinary efforts to prove patriotism and loyalty to the King. The difficulty with her thesis is that she undervalues the domestic considerations involved in English Relief. She also underestimates the conundrum facing eighteenth-century British parliamentarians dealing with Ireland. Connell's description of Irish relief is mono-causal in that she ignores Ireland's separate and very different political culture, stemming from its diversity of religion and linguistic groups. British politicians would not have formulated domestic policies on crisis alone. Politicians recognized, however, that Ireland served as an example of the dangerous effects of the penal code in religious matters, when three fourths of the population were oppressed and rendered poor because of religion.

Thomas Bartlett proposes that Ireland had since the 1760's been growing into a problem because the patriot ranks, both Catholic and Protestant, sought to rid

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[9] ***Annual Register***, vol. xxi, 1778, 190-91.

[10] Irish Catholic Relief received Royal Assent shortly following English Relief in 1778.

Ireland of its colonial identity.[11] The frequent declarations of loyalty from the Irish Roman Catholics led the British Government to think in terms of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, rather than the Protestants, who like the Protestant colonies or Protestants sympathizers of America, had a reputation of resisting British authority. Bartlett claims that neither the British Government or the Roman Catholics of Ireland accepted the Protestant élite's terms for Irish Catholics' admission into the "Irish Nation" with inferior status.[12] Bartlett claims that the timing and the authorship of the Catholic Relief Bill annoyed the Irish Protestants. [13] He does, however, propose that the Catholic question was used by the British Parliament to create dissension amongst the Patriots, a strategy which eventually lost its vigor once the Volunteers in the 1780's recognized the need for concessions to be made for the Catholics in order to achieve greater Irish unity.

Robert Kent Donovan claims that historians have ignored the connection between recruiting soldiers and promoting religious toleration, a connection which he believes was not lost on Protestant contemporaries.[14] North's Administration and its supporters included many Scotsmen and Englishmen with Scottish connections who supported a forward military policy.[15] While the Opposition sanctioned the Bill with the intention of granting relief, the North Ministry had organized relief for Roman Catholics in secrecy over an extended period of time and as a progressive plan of war. Donovan bases much of his case on the propaganda efforts of Sir John Dalrymple, encouraging the notion of Roman Catholics enlisting in the military. The anti-Catholic riots in Scotland following the Relief Bill of 1778 were a reaction against the military intentions of the Administration toward the Protestant colonies. While Donovan vaguely links the discussion of toleration to other imperial issues, he ignores the philosophical origins of relief, which was the basis upon which all policy had meaning and practical efficacy. One is struck by the arguments used in Parliament for relief, which were perhaps the rhetoric of the enlightened age but which clearly revealed a determination to reform the state's policies around religious issues. When one examines the debates, it is evident that the Opposition was more

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[11] Thomas Bartlett, "'A People Made Rather for Copies than Originals': The Anglo-Irish, 1760-1800," ***The International History Review***, 12, I, February 1990.
[12] Ibid., 18.
[13] Ibid., 19.
[14] Robert Kent Donovan, "The Military Origins of the Roman Catholic Relief Programme of 1778," ***The Historical Journal***, 28, 1, (1985), 82.
[15] Among the Scotsmen were Henry Dundas, Alexander Wedderburn and Lord Mansfield. He also includes Lord George Germain in the group of Scots in that his mother was Scottish. See R. K. Donovan, "Sir John Dalrymple and the origins of Roman Catholic Relief, 1775-1778," ***Recusant History***, vol.17, 1984-85, 195.

"advanced" in policy than Donavan acknowledges, since many Opposition members had for quite some time been actively pursuing religious toleration for Protestant Dissenters.[16] Catholic relief as part of a general revision of the penal system could have been part of the Opposition's parliamentary reform policy. One must also wonder if the Administration's design of the Quebec Act in 1774 indicated to the Opposition that the climate was such that there was no reason to believe that relaxation of the penal laws in religion would meet with disagreement from that quarter.

It is the consensus of these historians that English Relief originated from political expediency. Parliament is seen as responding to the political crisis of Ireland or the war with America and France. However, one must consider the significance and the extent to which Parliament had the confidence to implement liberal policy on home soil . Government was more likely to take risks, arguing in matters of religion that it was the duty of all true Protestants to be lenient with the "misguided" in matters of the faith. The upper gentry in Parliament were prepared to make concessions, even though it had been made apparent in 1774 in the 'anti-popery' campaign organized by the radicals against the Quebec Act that the populace in the kingdom rioted with any change of policy.

The change in climate favorable to religious freedom was aided by the revised theology of Catholicism in England as well as throughout the rest of Europe. In the case of Scottish Catholic Enlightenment, the historian Mark Goldie suggests that the leading clergy of the Catholic community set about integrating Catholicism into the mainstream of Scottish civic and intellectual life. In doing so, they embraced Enlightenment intellectuality in an enthusiastic way.[17] Before the 1770's, Catholics were instinctively jacobites since Rome had supported the Stuart claim to the throne until the death of the Pretender in 1767. Once Catholics recognized the ascendancy of George III, they were perceived to be less threatening to Great Britain. While the toleration bill of 1779 failed amid a frenzy of anti-popish passion, that of 1793 succeeded more easily than they could have hoped.[18] In England, according to John

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[16] The Duke of Richmond proposed that the RockinghamWhigs work together with the Dissenters since "their religious principles and our political ones are so very similar, and most probably will make us generally act together." The Duke of Richmond to the Marquis of Rockingham, 26 April 1772, ***Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and his Contemporaries***, George Thomas, Earl of Albemarle, ed., (London: Richard Bentley, 1852), 224.

[17] Mark Goldie, "The Scottish Catholic Enlightenment," ***Journal of British Studies***, vol. 30 (1991), 22.

[18] Ibid., 26.

Bossy, the Roman Catholics were very active in the rural districts.[19] He claims that the conditions were such that a Catholic Committee was organized in 1778 in order to prepare a petition for relief.[20]

Confidence was gained during the debates and the domestic consequences around the Quebec Act, a consideration not normally taken up by historians dealing with relief. Government learned from the Quebec Act that standard ecclesiastical policy could be altered for the benefit of the state. Parliamentarians had struggled over the meaning of toleration which came to mean that the recognition of the civil and religious freedoms of the Catholic Community in Quebec were equally as important as the rights of the Protestant settlers in the Province. It was argued by Lyttelton and others during the Quebec Bill debates of 1774, for example, that the spirit of toleration was the best means of winning over the loyalty of the Canadians to the British Crown. To not consider the Canadians would have been "barbaric" and "cruel".

While it is unlikely that the Quebec Act was the cause of Parliament's incentive to re-examine the domestic penal laws against Catholics, the Quebec Act might have facilitated further discussion on the Catholic question in that it signaled a change in climatetowards more toleration in religious issues. In other words, the Quebec Act was the first extensive concession made to Catholics by the British Parliament and, as such, set a precedent which, whether intended or not by the North Administration, would have been difficult to ignore for many contemporaries championing or rejecting the notion of toleration. Opposition members like Edmund Burke, who supported the religious freedoms of non-conformists in general, as well as Savile's Catholic Relief Bill, had taken the opportunity to state his opinion on the principle of toleration in the 1774 debate on the Quebec Bill. He said "There is but one healing, Catholic principle of toleration which ought to find favor in this House. It is wanted, not only in our colonies, but here. The thirsty earth of our own country is gasping and gaping, and crying out for that healing shower from heaven."[21] The penal laws themselves in England were considered to be outdated and oppressive. The liberal spirit of the times raised new questions as to the efficacy of the penal system and to the general welfare of a State, which was founded on religious oppression.

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[19] John Bossy, ***The English Catholic Community 1570-1850***, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1975), 296.
[20] ***Ibid.***, 330.
[21] J. Wright ed., ***Debates of the House of Commons in the year 1774 on the Bill for Making More Effectual Provision of the Government of the Province of Quebec***, 223.

Parliamentarians were less inclined to support a policy in England which oppressed people on the basis of their religion.

The question of course had been, what were to be the limits of toleration? The Opposition challenged the Administration during the Quebec Bill debates in 1774 on the liberal measures of the Bill claiming that the Bill "established" rather than tolerated Roman Catholicism over a large land mass. In 1778, Attorney General Thurlow and others of the Administration approached the repeal of the Act of William III with more caution, recommending that Parliament discuss the limits of toleration in the discussion of the dismantling of the penal laws, as to what they thought safe in allowing the free preaching and teaching of the religion.[22]

While the Quebec Act had begun the discussion of toleration as a principle of government, the Catholic question in British politics had already a long political tradition behind it. Until the death of the Pretender, Rome and its followers in Great Britain and Ireland supported the Stuart claim. Roman Catholics therefore opposed the civil and religious establishment of the State, which, as a safety mechanism, put a strict penal structure in place to limit the Catholics' religious and civil freedoms. Foreign observers, such as Montesquieu, described the penal laws: "they are so rigorous, though not professedly of the sanguinary kind, that they do all the hurt that can possibly be done in cold blood."[23] William Blackstone in his ***The Commentaries on the Laws of England*** published in the 1750's claimed that they were seldom exerted to the most rigor.[24] Blackstone viewed the penal laws against Catholics, in their historical context, as necessary for the security of the State and the Protestant ascendancy. The necessity of the penal laws purely reflected the conditions of the time, and were not permanent fixtures of the state.

> But if a time should ever arrive, and perhaps it is not very distant, when all fears of a pretender shall have vanished, and the power and influence of the pope shall become feeble, ridiculous, and despicable, not only in England but in every kingdom of Europe; it probably would not then be amiss to review and soften these rigorous edicts; at least till the *civil* principles of the roman catholics called again upon the legislature to renew them: for it ought not to be left in the breast of every merciless bigot, to drag down the vengeance of these occasional laws upon inoffensive, though mistaken, subjects; in opposition of the

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[22] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xix, 1141.

[23] William Blackstone, ***Commentaries on the Laws of England: A Facsimilie of the First Edition of 1765-1769***, Thomas A. Green, ed., (Chicago: At the University Press, 1979), vol. 4, 57.

[24] Interesting, however, is the fact that at the time of Blackstone's ***Commentaries on the Laws of England***, the lingering effects of the 1745 Rebellion were vivid in the minds of Protestants and parliamentarians.

> lenient inclinations of the civil magistrate, and the destruction of every principle of toleration and religious liberty.[25]

Blackstone predicted that once the Catholic religion and a tyrannical form of government were no longer synonymous, the state would no longer have just cause to prohibit the free exercise of the religion.

A decade following the first publication of Blackstone's ***Commentaries***, the Stuart threat was gone with the death of the Old Pretender in 1767. The Protestant Ascendancy secured by the House of Hanover and the established Church gained confidence in the security of their institutions. The main challenge to the religious establishment came from the Protestant Dissenters who were becoming more numerous and more reluctant to settle for the limited toleration granted under the Toleration Act of William's reign. The claims of the Protestant Dissenters were viewed as factious for the state. Catholicism was still obnoxious as long as the Catholics recognized the Pope as supreme head of Church and State. Since their loyalty was first to the foreign power in Rome, "popery" in its political sense implied on arbitrary form of government, a notion often advanced during the American crisis and further refined in the opposition to the Quebec Act.

The Catholic question, while having been raised during the discussion over Quebec policy in 1774, traditionally referred to Ireland and Scotland where Catholics accounted for a large percentage of the population. As late as 1773, the Privy Council espoused the belief that Catholicism should be monitored and restricted in Scotland and Ireland because of the dangers those regions traditionally posed for Great Britain. In the case of Scotland, there was always the concern, particularly among the Presbyterians there, that Catholicism was increasing. In 1773, the General Assembly of Scotland in their efforts to prove their attachment to His Majesty's person, Royal Family, and Government emphasized their "vigilance and attention to the interests of the Protestant religion, and to prevent the growth of Popery." Lord Cathcart reported that "there is nothing pressing or alarming, the highest calculation of Papists in Scotland not exceeding 20, 000."[26] The Earl of Suffolk replied on behalf of the King that His Majesty approved of the inquiry and that the King hoped that "the inquiries about to be made will prove that the Roman Catholic persuasion does not gain

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[25] W. Blackstone, ***Commentaries on the Laws of England***, vol. 4, 57.
[26] Cathcart to the Earl of Suffolk, May 1773, ***Calendar of Home Office Papers of the Reign of George III, 1773-75***, (London: Public Record Office, 1899), vol. 4, 52.

ground, and that consequently it will not be expedient to take any measures with regard to it."[27]

In the case of Ireland, the Catholics were more numerous, creating other problems for Parliament. Loyalty to Great Britain had always been the most immediate concern. It had been the belief prior to and during the reign of William III that strict penal measures would keep Catholics subservient and weak, and eventually persuade them to convert to Protestantism. By the 1770's however, the number of Catholics remained roughly three-fourths of the population, proof that Catholicism in Ireland was a long way from decline. Edmund Burke had for a long time argued that the majority in Ireland were governed by the oppressive laws for the sake of the few: "Surely the state of Ireland ought for ever to teach parties moderation in their victories...If laws are their enemies, they will be enemies to laws; and those who have much to hope and nothing to lose will always be dangerous more or less."[28]

The internal politics of Ireland became very complex in the 1770's with the American War, French hostilities towards Great Britain, the raising and growing popularity of the Protestant volunteers,[29] and the talk of economic and political union with Britain. The economic and political climate in Ireland in the 1770's brought to the fore the Catholic question in British politics. The stories of the militancy of the Protestants in Ireland put Catholics in a more favorable light. While ridiculing the fact that government was profiting from Protestant 'egoism', a revenue officer from Cork claimed that "The rich Papists declare that they will spend their last shilling to get men, and that they will do everything in their power to find out every deserter from the King's troops in this country, and that the more people talk against them, the more conspicuous their loyalty will be."[30] The loyalty of the Catholics to government and their show of good behavior contrasted with Protestant ambivalence toward the American war. The Earl of Charlemont, an Irish patriot and independence supporter, proposed that the penal laws had been reconsidered because:

> ... government was now induced to court the Papists by their fear of the Protestants, and wished to oblige and to strengthen that party, which,

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[27] Earl of Suffolk to Lord Cathcart, June 1773, ***Ibid.***, vol. 4, 56.

[28] Edmund Burke to Charles James Fox, 8 October 1777, ***Burke's Correspondence***, Wood, ed., vol 3, 387.

[29] The Protestant Volunteers were armed and organized groups of citizens all over Ireland who were ready to defend the country from any French attack. The organizations became popular in 1778 with French involvement in the America War. They also served to maintain civil order and later to transport French prisoners of war to appropriate confinement. See David Lammey, "The Growth of the 'Patriot Opposition' in Ireland during the 1770's," ***Parliamentary Hiwtory***, 7,2, (1988), 277-8.

[30] Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to Lord Rochford, 21 August 1775, ***Calendar of Home Office Papers***, vol. 4, 388.

> as well from influence of a servile religion, as from its precarious situation in the country, was likely, they thought, to be wholly dependent on them, thus raising what they deemed a necessary barrier against those encroachments which they now began exceedingly and not without reason, to dread.[31]

Other ways that the loyalty of Catholics could serve Government, according to Sir John Dalrymple, was in the military along with the Protestants of His Majesty's kingdom. In a published note to the King, Dalrymple stressed that "There are, in Ireland, and elsewhere, an infinite number of idle Roman Catholics, who only wait for permission to serve their country."[32]

The other perspective that Westminster had on the Catholic situation in Ireland was that the economic state of Ireland revealed that the penal laws in religion had negative side effects on the state and in the end, did nothing to promote or to aid Protestant supremacy. Catholics, according to Charlemont, had no way to dispose of their money other than trade because they could not purchase landed property.[33] Consequently, the Catholics, particularly in the Southern regions, became wealthy merchants and money lenders. The embargo on the American trade since 1775 had progressively been impoverishing Irish merchants who had relied heavily on the trading routes between Dublin and America. Throughout the mid-1770's, reports were received at Westminster, stating that concessions needed to be made in order to address the ailing economic state of Ireland. Unfortunately, the debates in Parliament for resolving the Irish economic crisis were made more difficult when English and Scottish merchants refused to include Ireland in the exclusive trading network already enjoyed by the trading communities of Scotland and England.

The author of the pamphlet published in 1775 called ***An Inquiry into the Policy of the Penal Laws, affecting the Popish Inhabitants of Ireland***, a native of Ireland, claimed that there were two circumstances relative to the state of that country.[34] He claimed the penal laws divided the inhabitants and rendered them incapable of contributing to the national improvement. The second circumstance was the "arbitrary and unjust design of reducing the Irish to the abject state of being servile dependents upon the imperious will of others." The author attacked the Act of

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[31] H.M.C., ***Earl of Charlemont***, vol. 1., 47.

[32] To the King, Jan 1778. ***Scots Magazine***, January 1778, 30.

[33] H.M.C., ***Earl of Charlemont***, vol. 1., 45.

[34] "An Inquiry into the Policy of the Penal Laws, affecting the Popish Inhabitants of Ireland. In which the History and Constitution of that Country, and the Rights of Colonies and Planters are briefly considered; and a few Observations made on the Laws that restrain the Trade of Ireland; with some Hints respecting America," ***Critical Review***, May 1775, 441.

Queen Anne's reign for not having succeeded in preventing the growth of popery. The laws kept the Catholics ignorant and poor and thus dependent on their priests. For ignorance to be dispelled, Catholics needed to have property and to learn of the system "upon which its security depends." The poverty of the majority of the people, it was argued, was more dangerous to government "than their interest and affection would be." Their participation in the state would interest them in the preservation of it. The author therefore recommended the repeal of the penal laws upon principles of civilization as well as political expediency.

By 1778, there were other writers who shared the same opinion as the author of the pamphlet discussing the penal laws in 1775. A West India Planter wrote in the ***Public Advertiser***, on the debates regarding the Irish Bills that "the Acts hold out no Grace to Roman Catholics as *Catholics*, but leave them to be as much tyrannized over as ever by the Protestant Individuals and Magistrates; and it is from the Catholics only, *while oppressed*, that we have to fear Mischief."[35] In a letter to Lord George Germain, the Bishop of Derry complained that a manifesto had been intended to be dispersed calling for "*Independence, Liberty of religion* to all *sects*, and *a free trade*."

The trade crisis in 1778 brought before Parliament the concern that the Roman Catholics of Ireland were ripe for rebellion.[36] In the same letter as the above, the Bishop of Derry stressed that, "If something therefore be not speedily affected to pacify both the Papists and the Presbyterians, we risque a general insurrection even upon the appearance of the French." He believed that, "The rights of humanity demand a general and unlimited toleration at all times," and that "A seasonable indulgence to the Presbyterian and Papist may save the Kingdom."[37] The urgency with which the Bishop described the situation in Ireland may have been for the purpose of ensuring that Parliament would consider very seriously the passage of the trade bills. Parliament had in the past delayed any trade concessions with Ireland, in part because members in Parliament did not see any pressing need for an immediate solution and were by 1776 preoccupied with the American War.

Some Members of Parliament made a connection between the religious preference and poverty in Ireland. In response to the trade crisis, British merchants and parliamentarians, in effect, proposed the need for revision of the laws. Earl Nugent opened the day's business on 7 April 1778 by stating that "From a long series of unshaken loyalty, the Irish, he said, were entitled to every encouragement which

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[35] "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser from West India Planter," ***Public Advertiser***, 5 May 1778.
[36] The Bishop of Derry to Lord George Germain, June? 1778, H.M.C., ***Stopford-Sackville***, vol .1., 249.
[37] ***Ibid.***, vol .1, .250.

good and faithful subjects could deserve, and a wise and grateful government could give; oppressive laws had hitherto been their only reward..." While Nugent was referring to the trade laws, he raised the important point that it was British laws which were oppressing the Irish even after their show of loyalty to England. He added that Great Britain was not benefiting economically from Irish oppression. Thomas Townshend followed Nugent and claimed that the economic distress of the Roman Catholics had lost their affections toward Great Britain, which he implied could be gained back on the point of religion.[38]

Not all politicians were prepared to link the trade crisis with the penal laws of Ireland. Lord North was quick to respond to Townshend's allusion to religious oppression and stressed that, "Ireland was not Parliament's province, it was the province of the Parliament of Ireland: the laws which were so severe against the Roman Catholics had originated there, and redress of domestic grievances should of right originate likewise from them." North believed that, "Leaving to the candour of their own parliament to grant such indulgence to the Roman Catholics as their loyalty deserves," it was, however, in the jurisdiction of the British Parliament to relax the trade laws which would benefit the Irish and ultimately enrich Britain.[39] North evidently did not want Parliament to become side-tracked from the issue at hand, since it was already nearing the end of the session. He may have also viewed religion as a contentious issue, given his experience in 1774, and preferred not to become entangled in the debate. While he claimed that the penal laws "were the consequence of apprehension which always adopted the most cruel and severe policy, " he certainly did not speak in Parliament during the Roman Catholic relief debates one month later.

Indeed, the Irish Parliament had, during the 1770's, attempted to bring in some form of concession for the Roman Catholic majority. On 11 February 1774, the Irish House of Commons brought in a bill to permit papists to take lots of ground on building leases for any term of years. It had been decided by the Irish Commons that it was necessary to annex "an oath of allegiance acknowledging the King's Supremacy, and denying all power in any pope or foreign prince to dispense with oaths,"[40] the so called Irish Act. On 10 May 1774, the Irish House of Lords rejected a bill "for granting liberty to Papists to lend money upon mortgages, and for the security of the repayment of the same," which had received the assent of the Privy

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[38] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xix, 1111-12.
[39] ***Ibid.***, vol. xix, 1112.
[40] ***Hibernian Magazine***, April 1775, 209-10.

Council in England.[41] In March of 1778, a Mr. Talbot gave the chief secretary a draft relief bill which aimed to repeal all the disabilities facing Catholics except exclusion from Parliament and office under the crown. The generous proposal probably never went beyond the Lord Lieutenant and the council, an indication that the proposal was viewed as to extreme for the expediency of the times.

These attempts at relief show a keen interest amongst some Members of the Irish Parliament to address their own Catholic question, related to property. Charlemont proposed in his memoirs that the Irish Parliament's attempts to relax the penal laws for the Roman Catholics related to the fact that many of the Parliamentarians had renounced their Roman Catholic faith in order to maintain the security of their properties.[42] Yet, for whatever reasons, the Irish Parliament since 1774 had been unable to agree on legislation dealing with the property rights of Roman Catholics. One must note, however, that the Privy Council had supported the Oath of 1774, which might lead one to believe that there is a connection to be made with the formulation of Quebec policy and the lenient toleration of Catholics in that province. The Protestant Irish had been shocked by Quebec Act: "The Quebec act too has raised an alarm in a people who dread Popery. The papists in England are not so considerable a body as to raise apprehensions, but in the County of Meath next to Dublin, they were found on a late inquiry to be nearly 30 to one. Their fears I believe are groundless, but one cannot much wonder at their remembering the Irish massacre."[43] The ***Hibernian Journal*** of 16 July 1777 reported that the Society of the Free Citizens of Dublin drank toasts, hoping "may the passing of the Quebec Bill never revive the times of Tyrconnel or Luttrell."[44] While these accounts suggest that Protestants made some link between the generosity of Quebec policy and their own situation, there is unfortunately no evidence to prove that either the British Parliament or the Roman Catholics of Ireland made such a connection The Administration tended to agree with the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Earl of Buckinghamshire, that something should be done to meet the Irish Catholics' "respectful complaints". Buckinghamshire was, however, nervous that any attempt to modify the penal laws

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[41] ***London Evening Post***, 17-18 May 1774.

[42] H.M.C., ***Earl of Charlemont***, vol.1., 44. See also the Bishop of Derry's suggestion that "the gentlement sacrific'd the liberty of religion to the security of their property," H.M.C., ***Stopford-Sackville***, vol.1, 250.

[43] H.M.C., ***Manuscripts of the Earl of Buckinghamshire***, 308.

[44] Cited in R. B. McDowell, ***Irish Public Opinion 1750-1800***, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.,[?]), 68.

"would probably occasion a flame in the country."[45] If representative of the Protestant population in Ireland, such accounts would explain why toleration was not to be easily discussed in Ireland, where the Catholics out-numbered the Protestants and the memories of Catholic rebellion were still very vivid. The willingness on the part of the English Parliament to be generous is remarkable when one evaluates the significance of the Irish Act of 1774 which allowed Roman Catholics to profess their loyalty to the King along with His Majesty's other subjects. There were endless accounts that Catholics were most anxious to take the oath.[46] The generosity on the part of Parliament generally reflects the mood of the times which contributed to and was embodied in the Quebec policy and the Irish Act of 1774.

The Catholic question involved a secular component of political expediency. Any links that were made between religion and the military, economic distress, and the legal establishment, allowed for detached and secularized debate of the Catholic issue. Ireland served as an example of penal laws taken to the extreme where the majority of the population had been rendered poor because of their religious preference. While the penal laws had been used to secure the loyalty of the Irish Catholics, it became clear that economic distress could lead to rebellion. While the policy toward Ireland revealed a confidence that Irish Catholics no longer posed the traditional threat to Britain, Westminster had not yet determined a policy which clarified its position on the Catholic question in British politics. The general increase in the show of loyalty from all parts of England, Ireland and Scotland, between April and May 1778 could very well have inspired politicians to indulge in a tolerant policy.

During April and May, a significant number of supporting addresses responding to the urgency of State affairs with regard to the war with France and America, were being sent before Parliament. The show of loyalty from the Roman Catholics of England and Ireland was impressive. Two Addresses from the Roman Catholics of Ireland, 13 April 1778 (301 names) and the town of Newry of Ireland, 8 April 1778 (311 names) pledged their allegiance to the throne and "offered to contribute to the defense of the honor and dignity of the crown and Constitution of England against those who would disturb the state or invade this kingdom."[47]

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[45] Cited in R. B. McDowell, ***Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760-1801***, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 189.

[46] "Dublin, July 4- On Wednesday upwards of fifty eminent Roman Catholic merchants and traders, preceded by the Lord Trimbleston, attended in the court of King's-bench, before the Lord Annaly, and took the oaths of allegiance to his Majesty" in ***Scots Magazine***, August 1775, 458.

[47] ***Scots Magazine***, May 1778, 266.

According to the ***Scots Magazine***, there were eighteen addresses on the state of the nation, not including the address of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, advertised in the gazettes between 5 May and 30 June 1778.[48]

Amidst the show of loyalty, a measure was taken in England to address a common problem between Catholic land owners and Protestant purchasers. On 15 May 1778 a bill "to allow a further time for the enrollment of deeds and wills made by papists and Relief for Protestant purchasers" received Royal Assent. John Elwes, an independent country gentlemen who tended to vote with the Opposition, had introduced the Bill into the House of Commons as early as 13 April 1778.[49] There is no recorded debate in either of the House of Commons or the House of Lords on this Bill.[50] This Bill was, however, a step forward for Roman Catholics who owned landed property. Although Catholics were required to give their lands to a Protestant heir or to a Protestant purchaser, the Bill demonstrated that the legal system was becoming more flexible. The passing of this Bill also signified Parliament's readiness to address their own Catholic question, a small hint that Ireland was not the only factor in Roman Catholic relief.

Perhaps seeing an opportunity during the motion on the Protestant Purchaser's Bill or because of the other proclamations of loyalty, the Roman Catholic Peers and Commoners of Great Britain presented an address to the King 1 May 1778. The Address had been signed by 10 Peers and 163 Commoners. It stressed that the Catholic Peers and Commoners assured their attachment to his Majesty and to the civil constitution of their country--"through all changes of religious opinions and establishments, has been at length perfected by that revolution which has placed [his] majesty's illustrious house on the throne." They expressed their gratitude for "the relaxations of the rigor of the laws, as the mildness of an enlightened age, and the benignity of your majesty's government, have gradually produced" and they hoped that there would be other indulgences "in their own season, to effect." It was stressed that their dissent from the legal establishment was purely conscientious and that it did not reflect any adverse to government, as their loyalty and show of good conduct over the years of George III's reign attested. In the final statements, the Catholic

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[48] Addresses from: Londonderry city, King's county, and the Protestant and Roman Catholics of the city of Waterford (5 May 1778); counties of Corke, Langford, Meath, and Wexford (12 May 1778); counties of Fermanagh, Galway, Limerick, Armaugh, and the Roman Catholics of Enniskillen (2 June 1778); counties of Waterford and Tipperary, and the towns of Carrickfergus and Corke (23 June 1778); town of Dragheda (27 June 1778); county of Tyrone (30 June 1778). In ***Scots Magazine***, June 1778, 319.

[49] ***Journals of the House of Commons***, vol. xxxvi, 921.

[50] Sheila Lambert, ***House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century***, (Wilmington: Scholarly Research Council, 1975) vol. 28.

Peers and Commoners guaranteed their allegiance to the cause and welfare of Great Britain and that they would be ready, "on every occasion, to give such proofs of our fidelity, and the purity of our intentions, as your majesty's wisdom, and the sense of the nation, shall at any time deem expedient."[51]

Catholic allegiance revealed a change in theology as well as a genuine willingness to share in the responsibilities of the state. In many ways, the English Relief Act of May 1778 served to show that most Members did not oppose the religion itself as long as there was no danger to the state. Liberty of conscience in temporal matters was being challenged by Protestant Dissenters as out of the jurisdiction of the state, and as such, people should not be punished for other religious preferences. The flaws of Catholicism would eventually become apparent and would lead people to convert to Protestantism.

The philosophical discussion over Protestant Dissenter relief was much more advanced in England than the philosophical issues raised over the Catholic question. The dissenting population also outnumbered the Catholic population in England. Protestant Dissenters tended to be the religious group which occupied the attention and the concern of Parliament during the 1770's. The radical essays of Dr. Richard Price, Unitarian minister and theologian, sparked debate on the nature of religious and civil liberty. Joseph Priestly, who was also a leading Dissenter, urged "the abrogation of all laws which do not tolerate all sects of Dissenters and Christians."[52] Their philosophical and religious debates called for complete toleration of the religious sects by natural right. Edmund Burke argued on 10 March 1773 that, "I would have toleration a part of establishment, as a principle favourable to Christianity, and as a part of Christianity."[53] He continued to argue that the religious penal laws," put vast bodies of men into a state of slavery and court dependence; since their liberty of conscience and their power of executing their functions depend entirely on His will." He stressed that one should not promote diversity, but if the country had many religions then the state should accept the diversity in order to avoid atheism.[54] If the established Church had anything to fear, the claims of the Protestant Dissenters would have the dissenting sects possess the same rights as the Anglican Church, a notion not

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[51] ***Hibernian Magazine***, June 1778, 362. ***Scots Magazine***, May 1778, 264-65.
[52] Joseph Priestly, "A Letter of Advice to those Dissenters who conducted the Application to Parliament for Relief from certain Penal Laws" (London, 1773) Cited in Richard Burgess Barlow, ***Citizenship and Conscience: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Religious Toleration in England During the Eighteenth Century***, 195.
[53] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xvii, 772.
[54] ***Ibid.***, vol. xvii, 779.

acceptable to the Bishops. George III also despised dissent since it challenged the authority of the religious establishment of Great Britain.

The Catholic question may have appealed to British politicians either supporting or rejecting Dissenter relief proposals. Dissenters already had a certain amount of religious freedom granted by the Act of Toleration of the Revolutionary Settlement which recognized the existence of the Dissenters and their liberty of worship. The complaint, particularly of the 1770's, was that the Test and Corporation Acts limited their religious freedoms. Catholics, as we have seen, had no law which recognized their group as a religious body free to exercise their worship or to educate their children in that religion. The use of the word "mass" was still subject to penalty under the penal laws. Those politicians who supported dissenting claims may have supported Catholic relief to show that the state had no business in religious conscience. One might speculate that contemporaries supported Catholic relief in order to set the precedent for dissenting relief, a policy which might have been necessary in order to re-establish the balance favorable to Protestantism over Catholicism. Those politicians who did not agree to Protestant Dissenter relief may have preferred to exercise toleration in a less offensive manner -- the relaxation of the laws preventing Catholics the freedom of religion and of property. The Protestant Dissenters' philosophical basis for toleration certainly could not be denied to the Catholic Community or else all discussion of religious freedom would have no meaning.

Up until 1778, the North Administration had been the innovators of reformed policy in imperial and religious matters, such as the Quebec and Irish policy already mentioned. The Opposition, on the other hand, had primarily been the champions of a liberal toleration for Protestant Dissenters. Two attempts for relief, in 1772 and 1773, had failed miserably without the Administration's backing. Members of the Opposition such as Sir George Savile continued to give support to the dissenting cause. On the discussion of Quebec policy, the Catholic question had raised the issue of what was "established" and what was "tolerated." Radical politicians opposed the Quebec Act on the grounds that the Act established Catholicism over territory not already settled or governed by Roman Catholics, arguing on behalf of the Protestant settlers in that Province. The Rockingham Whigs supported the liberal tendencies of the Act but questioned the Administration's motives behind the policy. By 1778, the Act had shed its 'popery' connection as was revealed in Sir George Savile's attempted repeal of the Quebec Act where no anti-Catholic sentiment was apparent throughout the debate.

That the Opposition undertook to introduce a bill in Catholic relief was not such an unusual development when one considers the outcome of the Quebec Act debates since 1774 and the Opposition's overall support for Dissenter Relief. The Administration was probably less inclined to attempt such a policy having been attacked so viciously, albeit by a minority, in 1774 over the Quebec Act. The Administration might have believed that they could not carry relief through Parliament, given the Administration's general unpopularity in 1778. It is further possible that North was fearful of the King, considering that, as William Pitt discovered in 1800, the King would not easily support a program of further relief.[55] A correspondent to the ***London Evening Post***, wrote in 1780 that, "About the Spring of the year 1778, several Roman Catholic Noblemen and Gentlemen applied to Lord North to get the laws then in force against them repealed; but his lordship told them that such a bill coming from him, or any of his friends, would never be suffered to pass, but advised them to make interest with some popular man in Opposition to bring in the bill."[56] The Catholic question had been raised during the Irish trade crisis and this may have signaled to those like Edmund Burke that this was an optimal time for relaxation of the penal laws in Ireland. Other Opposition members who favored Protestant relief may have seized upon the occasion to promote toleration in the hopes that Protestant relief was not far off. On balance, the issue of Roman Catholic relief overcame traditional barriers of party politics. The Opposition and Administration were able to agree to a policy on the principle of toleration, a phenomenon which had not yet been achieved for Dissenter relief. Even competing factions within the Opposition coalesced to support the measure. Burke summed up the effort for Roman Catholic relief:

> We might give an exclusive preference to one religious Denomination with regard to publick Trust and official power, but that in point of property all Mankind ought to be upon a level. On this great fundamental point you must have observed, a perfect concurrence in all political and all religious Parties. Whigs and Tories, Ministry and opposition, Bishops and Presbyterians were perfectly agreed. The Whigs indeed as more strongly urged by their principles, took the lead. Sir George Savile and Mr. Dunning, Lord Rd Cavendish and Mr. Connolly, spoke the Sentiments which belonged to the whole body.

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[55] Pitt's proposals for Catholic relief in 1800 were blocked by opposition of the King and Pitt resigned as Prime Minister. It was only after George III's reign that an Act for Catholic Emancipation was able to pass in 1829.

[56] ***London Evening Post***, 8-10 June 1780.

> Without those Sentiments Whiggism would certainly be nothing more than the name of a faction. [57]

Savile's Catholic Relief Bill, introduced on the 14 May 1778, offered the Catholic Community in England and Wales the freedom of religion and the security of property. The author of the Bill, however, was John Dunning who was a supporter of the Earl of Shelburne and who later challenged the influence of the Crown in 1780. He charged the Act of William III of promoting "great and grievous penalties".[58] He reiterated the purpose of the repeal of William III's Act, stressing the clause affecting the Catholics' power of acquiring any legal property by purchase which carried a much greater latitude than was understood. The imprisonment of a priest for life for officiating in the services of his religion and other such laws in the times of the "liberality of the present," demanded repeal. While the House had softened the laws in practice, Roman Catholics were still at the mercy of any informing constable's complaint, which the magisterial and judicial powers were bound to enforce.[59] According to the historians Namier and Brooke, Dunning was a great weight in the House and reserved himself for the more important debates in the House of Commons.[60] It is noteworthy that Dunning spoke on this occasion. There is no evidence which reveals Dunning's religious affiliations or his reasons for formulating the Relief Bill presented by Sir George Savile. As a radical thinker, it is indeed conceivable that he supposed that revision of the penal code was a necessary part of the changes to be made along side other political reforms necessary in Parliament. Yet, if this was the case, Catholic relief would only have been a preliminary look at the "ills" of the system, which later became part of the platform for revision of the political and legal system in 1780.

Savile's endorsement of the Bill was certainly a mystery. Burke wrote much later that Savile's Act was:

> most assuredly not brought in by him from any partiality to the sect which is the object of it. For among his faults, I really cannot help reckoning a greater degree of prejudice against that people than becomes so wise a man. I know that he inclines to a sort of disgust, mixed with a considerable degree of asperity of the system; and he has few, or rather no habits with any of its professors. What he has done was on quite other motives.

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[57] Edmund Burke to Anon., circa 3 June 1778, ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood,ed., vol.3, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1961), 456.
[58] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xix, 1139.
[59] ***Ibid.***, vol. xix, 1140.
[60] L. Namier and J. Brooke, ***The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790***, vol. 2, 368.

Burke claimed that these motives were "his extreme zeal to the Protestant religion, which he thought utterly disgraced by the act of 1699; and his rooted hatred to all kinds of oppression, under any color, or upon any pretence whatsoever."[61] Another contemporary also wrote in the same year that "Sir George Savile's well known liberal sentiments, and zeal for toleration in its greatest extent, made him a proper man...and has with the best and most patriotic principles, been doing the Minister's work."[62] The Opposition may very well have thought that Savile, if he was willing to support the Bill, could have ensured that the Dissenters did not oppose the Bill as they had the Quebec Act so adamantly during the elections of 1774.

Savile did have the support of the Dissenters, or so he claimed, when challenged by Sir James Lowther in June 1778, claiming that the Dissenters objected to the Bill. "Sir George Saville now rose to explain himself respecting the Roman Catholic Bill, and assured the room, the Dissenters were very anxious for the Catholics to enjoy the fullest privileges with the rest of his majesty's subjects."[63] Walpole also accused Savile of "[choosing] this very moment to indispose the whole body of Dissenters towards him and his party by rising up the champion of the papists."[64] In fact, a Dissenter who had supported the relief from the subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles in 1773, Serjeant Adair, spoke in favor of Savile's motion. Savile's participation in relief at the very least suggests a diversity of motive behind the Opposition's program for relief.

Other formidable speakers from the Opposition in favor of the motion, were the Marquis of Rockingham and the Earl of Shelburne who spoke in the Lords on 25 May 1778. The fact that both leaders gave support to the Bill also implies that it was a concerted effort on the part of the Opposition. Both Rockingham and Shelburne argued that the repeal simply brought the subjects back to a level with other subjects in a few points of religious toleration and security of possessions. In other instances, Roman Catholics remained inferior to Protestants, "with respect to privileges of religion, profit, power, and honours."[65] The Earl of Shelburne used Ireland as an example where three-fourths of the population were reduced to a state of wretchedness, "tending equally to alienate their affections from this government, and to prevent an influx of wealth from that country to this." He gave an example which

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[61] ***Annual Register***, vol. xxi, 1780, 196.
[62] ***London Evening Post***, 8-10 June 1780.
[63] ***Town and Country Magazine***, August 1778, 452.
[64] W.S. Lewis, ed., ***Horace Walpole's Correspondence with William Mason***, vol. 1, 398.
[65] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xix, 1145.

suggested that the penal laws were universally oppressive because there was no flexibility in the establishment which would allow proper judgment to determine the severity of the crimes and appropriate punishment.[66]

The Members who spoke on behalf of the Administration tended to be the members who had not been tainted by the Quebec Act debates either by the press or by the Opposition. Members from both the Lords and the Commons who did speak on the occasion, such as the Attorney-General Thurlow, Lord Beauchamp, Henry Dundas, Charles Ambler, and the Bishop of Peterborough, had low profiles on the issue of religion and toleration. The more outspoken in matters of religion such as Lord Mansfield, Lord Hillsborough, Lord Camden and Lord Lyttelton were all in attendance but did not contribute to the debate. These same Lords were part of the 85 in attendance in the House of Lords on the day when Rockingham and Shelburne made their speeches and on the 27 May when the Bill passed without a division.[67] Lord North did not even speak in the Commons at any point during the debates. There was obviously confidence in both Houses that the Bill would pass if left to the individuals who came forward on the motion.

The Members who did make speeches tended to be more cautious in their approach to the relaxation of the penal laws in comparison to the Opposition. Attorney General Thurlow stated that he supported the repeal but that he thought the House should give more careful consideration to the freedoms to be granted to the priests. The House had to decide the limits to what they thought safe in allowing the free preaching and teaching of the religion.[68] On the second reading of the Bill, 18 May 1778, Charles Ambler recommended that the whole system of the penal laws be revised since the cause and reason of their enactment no longer existed.[69] He wanted, however, to delay the Bill until next session when the whole penal code could be examined in committee. He also insisted that some restraints were necessary: "let them enjoy what they have, but let them not increase their possessions."[70] On 25 May 1778, during the second reading in the House of Lords, the Bishop of Peterborough supported the notion of civil and religious liberty and that there should be neither "penalty or restraint on the intercourse between God and a man's own conscience." The Bishop did state, however, that any consideration of the removal of the restrictions on popery, distinct from the political superstructure, ought to be with

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[66] ***Ibid.***

[67] ***Journals of the House of Lords***, vol. xxxv, 501.

[68] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xix, 1141.

[69] ***Ibid.***, vol. xix, 1142.

[70] ***Ibid.***, vol. xix, 1143.

deliberation. He complained that it was late in the session and that there had not been any consideration as to the state of the nation if it passed into law--"to prevent alarms of imaginary danger, with which ignorance and malice have heretofore, and may again kindle such a flame, as the authority of law will find it difficult to extinguish." The Bishop ended his speech by raising the question as to whether or not the repeal would have opposite effects where Protestants could potentially suffer losses because there would be no guarantees for Catholics who wish to become Protestant.

Few Administration supporters shared the same zeal as the Opposition. Lord Beauchamp stated that he thought the repeal of these restrictive laws which had for so long depressed three-fourths of the people in Ireland would increase the benefits of the Irish Trade Bills that were also being discussed. He expressed the hope that Savile's Bill would be an example to the Irish parliament, in whose power it was to give that relief to their brethren. He also did not think that the little indulgence proposed to be given to the Roman Catholics necessitated a test; the House was merely saving the statutes from disgrace by repealing the Act of William III. Henry Dundas, Lord Advocate, stated that the repeal did not extend to Scotland because the Act of William III had been passed before the union. He therefore proposed to make a similar proposal for Scotland to be brought in the next session of Parliament. Turner expressed the wish that there would be a universal toleration established by law which would free Catholics and Dissenters alike. Catholics, he argued, were worthy citizens and good Christians.[71]

Despite general support for the Bill, there were queries raised about the timing and the intentions of the Opposition. One member of the Opposition, Sir James Lowther, complained about the Irish and English Catholic Relief Bills and "hoped the two nobles who patronized the format, and the hon. gentleman who brought in the latter, would declare what lengths they meant to go in their future bills which they intended to bring in the next session on the same grounds, that they might not be hurried through in a similar manner to the last but that parliament might know what they were doing."[72] There might have been some hesitation from the Administration to speak in favor of the Opposition's motion, on the grounds that neither saw eye to eye in religious matters, especially with regards to toleration as it applied to Protestant Dissenters. The general silence on the part of key Administration figures who espoused tolerant and liberal beliefs, such as Lord Mansfield and Lord Lyttelton, confirmed support for the toleration of Catholics only. The Irish Bill for relief, which

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[71] ***Ibid***.
[72] ***Town and Country Magazine***, August 1778.

was to receive Royal Assent on 14 August 1778, contained a clause in favor of the removal of the Test Act for the Dissenters, and occasioned new discussion of Catholic relief.

The Relief Bill was introduced to the Irish Parliament on 25 May, 1778. The M.P. for Dublin, Luke Gardiner, presented the bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics of Ireland.[73] The Bill abolished the provisions in the Act, "to prevent the further growth of popery," of 1704. Gardiner explained that he intended to "follow the example of Great Britain and to give them the liberty of lands." The Irish Bill had to resemble Sir George Savile's Bill in order for the Bishops to give their concurrence.[74] Irish Catholics were allowed leases for 999 years, being still obliged to pay some kind of rent to the Protestant owner of the freehold. The Irish Parliament also included a clause which proposed to abolish the sacramental test for Protestant Dissenters, which was later deleted by the Privy Council. The Irish House of Commons agreed with the argument that it would not be fair that the Catholics be disappointed because the Presbyterians had to wait until the following session before their relief measure was considered. The Bill passed 127 to 84,[75] a significant victory for the members who had supported Catholic relief in previous years. The fact that an agreement had been reached given the complicated parliamentary relationship between England and Ireland emphasized the zeal of those members in both countries to secure a policy in favor of the Roman Catholics.[76]

To judge from his correspondence, there is evidence to suggest that Burke was actively pursuing Irish relief in consequence of Savile's Bill, even though he did not speak during the debates on English relief. Burke had always argued in favor of the relaxation of the penal laws in Ireland as well as some kind of toleration on the behalf of the Dissenters. The clause inserted by the Irish Parliament on behalf of the Dissenters was probably an attempt to counter the influence of the Catholics given relief. Burke, most likely understanding the difficulty of Catholic relief in Ireland,[77]

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[73] According to the ***Journals of the Irish House of Commons***, Gardiner's motion was made on Monday, 25 May 1778. See ***Journals of the Irish House of Commons***, Dublin, IX, i, 475, in John A. Wood, ed., ***Burke's Correspondence*** , vol. iii, 450. The ***Scots Magazine*** has recorded 5 June 1778 as the day of his motion. See ***Scots Magazine***, August 1778, 452.

[74] Edmund Sexton Pery to Edmund Burke, 25 May 1778, ***Burke's Correspondence*** , Wood, ed., vol. iii, 450.

[75] R. B. McDowell, ***Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760-1801***, 190.

[76] The passage of the Irish Bill had been complicated by Poynings' Law. The Irish Parlaiment had to agree on a policy which then had to be agreeable to the Irish Privy Council. If the Irish Council let the bill pass, then it was submitted to the English Privy Council who either revised or refused the whole measure. Because religion was involved, the Bishops in both the Irish Lords and the English Lords had to agree.

[77] To Edmund Sexton Pery, 3 July 1778, ***Burke's Correspondence***, Wood, ed., vol. iv, 3.

campaigned for the clause which was similar to his own understanding of toleration. Months following English Relief, Burke reminded Sir Grey Cooper, "of the understood compact between parties upon which the whole scheme of the toleration originating in the English bill was formed...," as a point in favor of accepting the clause submitted by the Irish Parliament.[78] Burke also discussed the matter with Lord North who said that his ideas of toleration were broad, but that, "large as they were, they did not comprehend a promiscuous establishment, even in matters merely civil- that he thought the established religion ought to be the religion of the state...on this he spoke with a good deal of temper." North was convinced that the Bishops would be offended by the repeal of the test and by "the steps taken for its repeal in England in the next session, in consequence of the repeal in Ireland." In the fear that Catholic relief for Ireland and further attempts for Dissenter relief would be hindered, Burke stated that the Whigs did not plan on moving the repeal of the test. Burke did, however, confess that if it were brought before the House that he would certainly vote for it.[79] Burke further worried that a rejection of the clause would further send the message abroad that "government was not at this moment very well pleased with the dissenters, as not very well affected to the monarchy."[80]

Burke made a link between the spirit of toleration embodied in the English Relief for Catholics and the Dissenters' claim. It is therefore possible that the Administration had been cautious in light of the implications Catholic relief had for Protestant Dissenters. Lord North would not support any measure which repealed the test. Furthermore, North believed that the various allowances made to other religions throughout the Empire, for example the Presbyterians in Scotland and the Catholics in Canada, "were governed, as all things of that nature are governed, not by general maxims, but their own local and peculiar circumstances." The argument in favor of toleration could not be based on the fact that toleration had been granted to other parts of the Empire.

The dissenting interest as well as the Opposition had, however, made the connection between policy abroad and domestic circumstances, conducive to the trans-Atlantic nature of Empire in the 1770's.[81] Toleration granted to one group would be difficult to distinguish from the claims of another group oppressed because of its religion. Indeed, Burke, Savile, Thomas Townshend and others of the

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[78] ***Ibid.***, vol. iv, 6.
[79] ***Ibid.***, vol. iv, 7.
[80] ***Ibid.***, vol. iv, 8.
[81] See David Milobar, ***The Constitutional Development of Quebec from the French Régime to the Canada Act of 1791: A British Perspective***.

Opposition did base their argument in favor of the Relief Act for Protestant Dissenters proposed in the Commons on 28 April 1779 on the grounds that Catholics were Dissenters in their own right. Consequently, the same members of the Opposition argued that relief had been granted to the Dissenters of the popish religion in 1778 and that it was therefore improper to refuse similar relief to Protestant Dissenters.[82]

The risk that the Opposition as well as the Administration took in passing the Relief measures certainly did not go by unnoticed. Burke conceded to Sir Grey Cooper that the Opposition had been aware of the risks that it had taken "when others declined it." Edward Newenham gave his private opinion to Lord Dartmouth, "that it was absurd, impolitic and ill-timed to touch on that dangerous ground; the repeal of the Irish Popery laws without Government was sure of a large majority."[83] Once news of the rioting in Scotland reached Parliament in 1778, the Secretary of State, Lord Weymouth, made known that the Scottish Relief Bill would be set aside; that no such Bill "was intended to be brought into Parliament, by any member of Government, or by any other person known to his Lordship."[84] Burke exclaimed about the riots that he had not anticipated to see a religious war in his time. He also reported that the Tories were unlikely to bring in the Scottish relief and wrote, "I am so struck with the admiration of this heroic act of Magnanimity in our Ministers, that I do not aspire to the most distant imitation of it." [85] Despite Burke's apparent disgust with the Administration's handling of the Scottish relief program, the Opposition did not propose a plan either.

Although little reaction followed the English Relief Bill, it did meet with some criticism. Some of the older Whigs, such as Horace Walpole, were horrified by the implications of the Act in that "Locke and Sidney" were being replaced with the likes of "Humes, Johnsons, and Dalrymples." The principles of toleration espoused by Richmond and Rockingham did not meet with the approval of all Whigs.[86] A correspondent to the ***Public Advertiser*** expressed his shock upon the earlier Address of the Roman Catholic Peers and Commoners. The alleged Protestant Whig claimed that the good reception of the Address by the King was ruinous of the civil and

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[82] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xx, 306.
[83] H.M.C., ***Earl of Dartmouth***, vol.2, 467.
[84] "Lord Wemouth to Thomas Miller, 8 February 1779," ***Caledonian Mercury***, 13 February 1779. Cited in ***Burke's Correspondence***, Wood, ed., vol. iv, 44.
[85] Edmund Burke to James Boswell, 1 March 1779, ***Burke's Correspondence***, Wood, ed., vol. iv, 45-46.
[86] The Duke of Richmond thought the Bill to relieve the Protestant Dissenters from the Thirty-nine articles, "a just one, founded on reason, good policy, and true principles of Whiggism and toleration." The Duke of Richmond to the Marquis of Rockingham, 26 April 1772, ***Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and his Contemporaries***, George Thomas, Earl of Albemarle, ed., 224.

religious liberties known to England. The correspondent obviously viewed Whig doctrine still founded on anti-jacobite principles.[87]

Some Protestant congregations also responded to the measure by clarifying their stand on Christianity.[88] A concerned Protestant sent to Parliament a petition in the ***Sussex Weekly Advertiser***, requesting that parts of the statutes as were solely calculated to prevent the growth of popery, and to restrain their priests from making proselytes in this Protestant Country, be maintained. Otherwise, "great numbers of Romish Priests and Jesuits, now out of employment, will certainly import themselves into this kingdom in order to pervert and poison the weak minds of the lower ranks of people." The petitioner thought it expedient to protect the Established Church from the influx of popish priests, from the rest of Europe.[89] The ***Public Advertiser*** shared the same belief that "it is the bounden Duty of the *Lords Spiritual*, to guard against the Encrease of the Number of Papists by every the most effectual legal Precaution that can be devised."

On balance, the Relief Act of 1778 may be seen as a remarkable effort on the part of the Opposition. As Burke so aptly put it, "it was the clear opinion of everybody that property ought to have the same security and freedom in every part of the British dominions,"[90] despite any religious differences that existed throughout the Empire. If relief had merely been the solution to circumstances requiring political expediency, such as the Irish crisis of 1778, Parliament would have been just as susceptible to the threat of retaliation from the lower orders of English society. Instead, Parliament continued with its program of relief despite the reports of urban disturbances in Glasgow and Edinburgh because it was confident that such a policy was just and consistent with the intellectual and religious climate of the age.

In Roman Catholic circles, the Bill was received with enthusiasm The Roman Catholic Church of England promptly encouraged Roman Catholic subjects to take the Oath of Allegiance. One discourse in a Catholic Chapel recommended the principles of gratitude, loyalty, and obedience to the British government.[91] A letter was published in the ***Critical Review***, to Sir George Savile on the generosity of the legislature and the gratitude of those who have been the objects of its indulgence in

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87 "A Whig Protestant to the Printer of the Public Advertiser," ***Public Advertiser***, 14 May 1778.
88 "Popery a perfect Contrast to the Religion of Christ: proved in a Sermon preached at Clapham, November 5, 1758. And published at the Desire of the Congregation," ***Critical Review***, October 1778.
89 ***Sussex Weekly Advertiser***, 25 May 1778.
90 Burke to Anon., [c. June 1778), ***Burke's Correspondence***, Wood, ed., vol.iii, 454-56.
91 "Discourse deliver'd in one of the Catholic Chapels, on the Propriety and Necessity of taking the Oath of Allegiance tendered by Government," ***Critical Review***, August 1778, 157. Also in ***Scots Magazine***, September 1778.

this occasion.[92] However, with the enthusiasm of the Roman Catholics on the rise and the increase in popular literature on the matter, extreme Protestantism resurfaced in the months following the English and Irish Relief measures. The Roman Catholics in Scotland nonetheless petitioned Parliament that they too might be granted relief in Scotland. In consequence, the Scottish Presbyterian communities responded in greater violence, eventually exploding into the Gordon Riots of 1780.

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[92] "A letter to Sir George Saville, Bar. upon the Allegiance of a British Subject,"***Critical Review***, July 1778.

Chapter III
The Protestant backlash to Roman Catholic relief

Passage of the Roman Catholic Relief Act by Parliament was pleasing to the tolerant political elite. It was not, however, well received by many Protestants in Scotland and England. Although a reaction was slow to gather momentum, once it started it became very difficult to deal with. Scottish resistance had been almost immediate following Lord Advocate Henry Dundas' proposed plan for a similar relief measure in Scotland. Throughout 1778 and 1779 there was a noticeable increase of anti-Catholic activity in the provincial synods of the Church of Scotland in order to prevent a similar relaxation of the religious penal laws. Anti-Catholic sentiment, however, reached all levels of society and incidents of rioting and mob violence against Catholics became more frequent.[1]

General alarm against the Roman Catholic Relief Act engendered a similar response in England, although delayed until at least a full year after the Act had received Royal Assent. Protestant Associations all over England organized themselves for a repeal of the Act. Lord George Gordon, leader of the Protestant Association of London and Westminster, had himself not spoken out against the measure in 1778. Lord Gordon only become relentlessly outspoken and anti-Catholic once petitions from Rochester and Ayrshire against the growth of popery were presented to the House of Commons in April 1780.[2] Unlike Scottish resistance which had produced scattered instances of mob violence against Catholics, organized opposition in England to the relief measure of 1778 through anti-Catholic propaganda resulted in the most extreme and uncontrollable insurrection that had ever threatened the order of the state since 1688 or 1745. Through a public summons in the newspapers, Lord Gordon had managed to assemble fifty or sixty thousand men in St. George's Fields on 2 June 1780 to present a petition to repeal the Catholic Relief Act of 1778. The consequences of this gathering was that the mob committed several acts of violence against members of Parliament making their way through the crowd to Westminster. "It would be impossible to describe the astonishment, sense of degradation, horror, and dismay, which prevailed in both houses. Attempts were twice made to force their doors; and were repelled by the firmness and resolution of their door-keepers and other officers....This mob was much more powerful and

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[1] After the meeting of the Synod of Glasgow a mob attacked some Catholics assembled for worship in a house. The mob terrorized and insulted the people and remained in the house until morning. See ***Scots Magazine***, December 1778, 685.

[2] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xxi, 386 and 533.

numerous, as well as dangerous, than any other in remembrance."[3] Sir George Savile and Lord Mansfield suffered the anger of the mob, having their houses completely demolished. All of Mansfield's personal notes on court cases for forty years past, which he had intended to publish, were burned along with all his books. Other figures associated with religious toleration had their property destroyed. Parliament was unable to carry on in its business and it adjourned for the safety of its Members on 6 June and did not reconvene until 19 June 1780. In the meantime, Catholic chapels and houses were burned, the jails of Newgate, the King's Bench prison, the new Bridewell in St. George's Fields, the Fleet Prison were destroyed, and the rioters decided to attack the Bank of England. The latter ended in several deaths when the soldiers were sent in to disperse the crowds.

An examination of the arguments used by the Protestant Associations in Scotland and England will be undertaken in order to explain why the organizations excited such violent popular appeal. Scottish resistance set a precedent for popular protest in England, the more radical districts of England being more ripe than others for an excuse to abate the authority of Government, particularly amidst the ensuing elections of June 1780. The Gordon riots helped to crystallize philosophical claims for and against religious toleration and the libertarian approach to politics. Extreme Protestantism persistedas a powerful element in English society as the elections of 1780 attest. The radicals once again used religion to discredit Government, except this time the parliamentary Opposition was under attack as well. Anti-Catholic sentiment continued to be highly divisive in politics throughout the 1770's, placing stress on the Opposition's reform movement of the early 1780's.

Contemporaries and historians have asked many questions of the events of June 1780, such as who or what did the mob represent? Contemporary sources suggest that the mob set the agenda of Lord Gordon and did not represent the Protestant interest at all. Other sources have pointed to the Dissenters as the largest body involved in the Association. A contemporary account of the Protestant Association was described by Sir Samuel Romilly: "The Methodists, the followers of Wesley, and the sectaries of Whitfield, were the first, if not to raise, at least to join, the cry against Popery."[4] Edward Gibbon described the riots as "forty thousand Puritans such as they might be in the time of Cromwell have started out their

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[3] ***Annual Register***, vol. xxiii, 192-93.

[4] Romilly to Rev. John Roget, 6 June 1780. Sir Samuel Romilly, ***Memoirs of the Life of Sir Samuel Romilly,*** (London: John Murray, MDCCCXL), 151.

graves..."[5] The historian Richard Burgess Barlow claimed that the Dissenters had been aggravated by the Dissenter Relief Act of 1779. According to Barlow, the Dissenters Bill produced very little reaction and that Dissenters were by 1779 aiming for a broader appeal for the legal toleration of all religious groups and even a complete religious liberty.[6] Barlow concludes that the Methodists contributed most to the alarmist camp, particularly since their leader, John Wesley published a tract against popery in the same month as the London riots in 1780.[7] It remains unclear from an examination of the sources, however, exactly when the Protestant Dissenting movement shifted from the smaller Feathers Tavern rallies to the more formal and broadly-based activities of the Protestant Associations.

Eugene Charleton Black, the leading authority on the Association since the 1960's, sheds light on Lord Gordon's connections with Scotland as the leading factor in the formation of the Protestant Associations in England. In fact, according to Black, the English Association was intended to be an extension of the relationship already shared by the Eighty-five Societies of Scotland. He claims that Lord George Gordon succeeded in stimulating Protestant movements in Canterbury, Rochester, Newcaste-on-Tyne, Bristol, and Bath. Black does not explain why the Protestant Association appealed to those districts. One might however surmise that the association principle succeeded in the various districts because there was a strong radical component and a long tradition of popular protest. This tendency toward radical politics would explain, perhaps, why Black supports the notion that the associations of England did not appeal to the Scottish organization because they were too political.[8]

The historian George Rudé has argued in his study of urban riots of the eighteenth century that there were other aspects to these disturbances than simply religion. According to Rudé, the London riots of 1780 were similar to the Wilkite riots of 1768. Where in 1768 the slogan had been "Wilkes and Liberty," the 1780 rioters chanted "No Popery." The rioters were not social riff-raff or of the "criminal elements" but rather segments of London's working population. Rudé also did not find any indication that the rioters were driven by hunger, as the wheat prices were low in 1780. He does claim that there is evidence that the rioters deliberately and

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[5] Gibbon to Dorothea Gibbon, 8 June 1780, ***The Letters of Edward Gibbon***, J.E. Norton, ed., (London: Cassell and Company ltd., 1956), 243.
[6] Richard Burgess Barlow, ***Citizenship and Conscience: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Religious Toleration in England During the Eighteenth Century***, 209.
[7] ***Ibid.***, 209.
[8] Eugene Carleton Black, ***The Association: British Extraparliamentary Political Organization 1769-1793***, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 149.

selectively attacked the property of wealthier Catholics and that the mob was hostile toward foreigners, especially the Irish, and Frenchmen and Spaniards who all became targets of popular dislike.[9] Rudé's study does suggest that crowds did adopt the language and symbolism of causes. Once the crowd became a mob the cause provided an excuse for violence. The advertisements in the press of the Protestant Association to present the petition to the Commons and the grand procession itself generated crowd participation.

The rise of extreme Protestantism in 1780 and the challenge made for relief had many similarities to the radical campaign during the elections of 1774 against the Quebec Act. Although used on a larger scale, the 'No Popery' slogan had the same meaning in 1780 as in 1774. Both the Association and the radicals relied on the religious implications of that slogan to rally support for the cause. The Association headed by Lord Gordon, while under the banner of religion, had the same political aims as the radicals of 1774 -- to oppose the tyranny of Government and to uphold the principles of Protestant exclusionism established after the Revolution of 1688. Consequently, it is not surprising that Protestant Dissenters, particularly Methodists, formed the main body of the Association. Furthermore, Dissenters remained disenchanted with the Government, particularly following the Quebec Act and the commencement of the war with America. Protestant Dissenters were probably drawn into anti-Catholic discussion upon the news of the Scottish resistance to the Catholic Relief Bill of 1778, because religious toleration of Protestant Dissenters had been an uphill battle throughout the 1770's. If the Quebec Act had hinted to many Dissenters that further religious toleration was possible in 1774, the failure of Government to entertain their demands in the following sessions of Parliament may have embittered them more against Catholicism and the parliamentary establishment.

Following the passage of the Relief Bill in 1778, there was a steady stream of literature in favor of toleration toward Catholics. Some pamphleteers urged further indulgence for Catholics. The author of ***Thoughts on the present State of the Roman Catholics in England, and on the Expediency of indulging them with a further Repeal of the Penal Statues*** recommended that the Catholics be allowed into the military and argued against the hardship of double taxes.[10] Another author of a widely read pamphlet, ***An Essay on Toleration of Papists***, claimed that religious and civil freedom were not endangered by the indulgence which the Government had bestowed

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[9] George Rudé, ***The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England 1730-1848***, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.,1964), 60-3.

[10] "Thoughts on the present State of the Roman Catholics in England, and on the Expediency of indulging them with a further Repeal of the Penal Statues" in ***Critical Review***, May 1779, 400.

upon its Roman Catholic subjects. [11] While general toleration appeared to be largely supported, there were many writers who felt that Government needed to be sensitive to the social climate in furthering toleration toward Roman Catholics. John Sturges, the author of ***Considerations on the present State of the Church-Establishment, in Letters to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London***, cautioned that in the case of popery, "it may be prudent and necessary to wait and see the effect of a partial relief, both on the opinions of the people at large and the conduct of the party relieved; for it certainly requires some experience to be perfectly assured, that popery will not make an ill use of any liberty which should be granted to her, considering her old restless spirit..." Sturges affirmed that, "the present Church of England on the whole deserves the esteem and veneration of our own age, and that it will hereafter be considered by posterity as a worthy and illustrious branch of Christ's Universal Church" because of its tolerant principles.[12]

While praise of the Roman Catholic relief measure appeared more quickly in the press following the Bill's passing, Scottish pamphlets represented the only opposition to the Act appearing in print. Scottish ministers, horrified by the proposition that Scotland would receive a similar bill, published their sermons in the ***Scots Magazine*** on the proposed relaxation of the religious penal laws. The Presbyterian ministers tended to agree that the liberty of conscience had not been denied by the penal laws already in place. John M'Farlan, author of ***A defense of the clergy of the church of Scotland who have appeared in opposition to the intention of an unlimited repeal of the penal laws against Roman Catholics***, claimed that they agreed that the penal laws against papists were too severe, "in so far as they respect the succession to property, civil liberty, of even the private exercise of their religion."[13] M'Farlan stated that an unlimited repeal of the penal laws would have bad consequences, particularly if Roman Catholics had the liberty of public teaching or if the education of youth was in their care. Under the description of toleration established at the time of William III's reign, "A toleration of all sects, opinions, and modes of worship, which are not dangerous to the state, or to particular persons," William Porteous, a minister from Glasgow, argued that popery should be denounced

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[11] "An Essay on Toleration of Papists," ***Ibid.***, February 1779, 153-154.
[12] John Sturges, "Considerations on the present State of the Church-Establishment, in Letters in the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London" ***Ibid.***, April 1779, 291-292.
[13] John M'Farlan, "A defence of the clergy of the church of Scotland who have appeared in opposition to the intention of an unlimited repeal of the penal laws against Roman-Catholics," ***Scots Magazine***, December 1778, 679-70.

because it was dangerous to the state.[14] Porteous's sermon on toleration argued that the penal laws of William III provided for a toleration of the Roman Catholics and had secured the Protestant religion from any dangerous advances of popery in the state. While he did express great concern about what he viewed as an unlimited toleration of popery, he implored his audience not to use mobbish violence to oppose a relaxation of the penal laws. "It is not the *man* of this religion whom we detest; it is the *religion* of these deluded men."

In part, the sudden surge of Scottish pamphlets was due to the writings of Archbishop George Hay, a Roman Catholic himself. Hay was actively in favor of a relaxation of the penal laws for Catholics, because, as he saw it, Catholic oppression under the current laws was a violation of the historic principles of the English Constitution. His position on relief, as well as his trip to London following the passage of the English Relief Bill of 1778 to push for a similar relief measure for Scotland, turned Presbyterians who resisted any change of the penal system in favor of Catholics against him. In November 1778, the clergy of the Church of Scotland was directed to study the "Popish controversy" which seemed to be exemplified by Bishop Hay's audacious defense of the Church of Rome in his pamphlet ***G.H.'s Answer to W.A.-D's Letter.*** The following passage in his pamphlet was interpreted as a confession that Catholicism was dangerous for a Protestant state to tolerate:

> where the Catholic religion is the one only *established* religion in a nation, and all the people join together in that communion, every attempt to bring in any innovation in religion must necessarily be attended with divisions, dissentions, and civil broils--The Church has, at all times, thought it her inherent duty to watch over the faith, as well as the morals of her children... Authorized, in this manner, by the word of God, or rather in obedience to so many repeated commands of that divine word, the church, when any of her children obstinately adhere to any false and heretical doctrine, not only cuts them off simply from her communion; but also considers them in the same infamous light in which the Apostle professes them, commands all her children to avoid their company, and forbids all kind of communication with them.[15]

Hay's description of the Roman Catholic Church was an attempt to ground the religion with a history of moral and responsible conduct in England, but his commentators claimed that his pamphlet proved the necessity of the religious penal laws. They argued that "he has proved, beyond contradiction, that *persecution,* for

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[14] William Porteous, "The doctrine of Toleration applied to the present times; in a sermon, preached in the Wynd Church of Glasgow, Dec. 10. 1778, a fast appointed by the Synod," ***Ibid.***, December 1778, 673-75.

[15] "To the author of the SCOTS MAGAZINE," ***Ibid.***, November 1778, 594.

matters of opinion, for *conscience sake*, is an avowed doctrine of the church of Rome." He also gave credence, it was argued, to the notion that all those who were not members of the established church of a state should be prosecuted for the safety of that religion.[16]

The pamphlet war between Presbyterian ministers in Scotland and Archbishop Hay persisted throughout 1778 and 1779. The pamphlets were the first indication that disaffection could hinder a similar relief measure for Scotland. The response to Catholicism which had led to violent attacks on the property and persons of Roman Catholics, including Hay, appeared in the reports and statements of the various synods which wielded the greatest social and political influence over parishioners in Scotland. Scottish Presbyterians reacted to English and Irish relief shortly following the Lord Advocate's recommendation that a similar bill be proposed for Scotland on 14 May 1778. Evidence from the ***Scots Magazine*** suggests that popular discontent toward Catholic relief originated from the concerns raised by Presbyterians at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at Edinburgh on 23 May 1778. A delegate to the Assembly proposed that an addition, stressing the members' concern about the English relief measure then recently passed, be made to the address to His Majesty, "on occasion of the continuance of the unnatural and unjust revolt of his Majesty's Subjects in North America." On this occasion, advocates for resisting Catholic relief lost by a majority to the moderates who argued that the members were not sufficiently informed as to the nature of the Bill to say anything on the subject. It was however agreed that if the Bill was found to endanger the Protestant religion, then consideration would be renewed on it.[17]

The minority remained unsettled by the Assembly's acquiescence toward popery so that it pressed the issue again three days later. The Assembly agreed to a motion which became the mandate for further inquiry into the alleged increase of popery in the provincial synods:

> That as a bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics in England, has been lately brought into parliament, and is already passed in the House of Commons; and as the next session of parliament may perhaps be over before another general assembly; that this assembly should give particular instructions to their commission, that, at their stated meetings, they should be very watchful over the interests of the Protestant religion in this part of the united kingdoms; and that they be very attentive when any proposal shall be made to extend the bill to

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16 "And further, he has kindly taught us, that every Protestant government, for the preservation of the public tranquillity, ought to enact against such persons severe penal statutes, and execute them with rigour." See "To the author of the SCOTS MAGAZINE," ***Ibid.***, November 1778, 593.

17 ***Ibid.***, May 1778, 267.

> Scotland; and if any thing occur to make an extraordinary meeting of the commission necessary, this assembly ... impower and ordain their principal clerk...to call an extraordinary meeting of the commission by advertisements in the news-papers. And the assembly appoint all their members to acquaint their constituents with the above resolution, that so they may send proper information concerning this matter to the meetings of the commission.[18]

These suspicions towards Parliament's intention to relax the laws against Catholicism continued to be propounded at the meetings of the provincial synods. At a provincial meeting of Glenelg on 3 July 1778, the members discussed the alarming progress of popery, "of late, within their bounds" where Roman Catholics were educating proselytes. The synod resolved, "to give this public testimony of their disapprobation" of the Roman Catholic Bill if ever it was to pass into a law. On 13 October, the synods of Glasgow and Air expressed their displeasure to the encouragement given to and the growth of popery and recommended the study of the "Popish controversy to all ministers within the province" and that their addresses be presented to the King, Lords, and Commons and the Lord Advocate on the subject of popery. On 21 October, the synod of Dumfries claimed that any relaxation of the popery laws would have hurtful consequences to the Protestant interest in that part of the kingdom. It also proposed that measures should be taken to prevent the repeal of the laws against popery in Scotland and any increase in that religion. The synods of Angus and Mearns, Galloway, Perth and Stirling, and Lothani and Tweeddale published comparable resolutions on the matter. More importantly, Angus and Mearns appointed a committee to correspond with other synods on the same subject.[19]

The organization of the provincial synods of the Church of Scotland into a united association proved effective. The synods were kept informed of the resolutions of other synods through the press and therefore shared in a united purpose. The press also served to inform non-members about the proceedings of their fellow Protestants against the dangers of popery. The use of the press to print resolutions presented to the readers a crisis of religion in politics by the increase of Catholicism. The alarmist temperament was aroused by the declarations in the press as well as in displays at the gatherings of the associations themselves to combat the intentions of Government to repeal the religious penal laws. It was not surprising in this hostile

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[18] ***Ibid.***, May 1778, 269-70.
[19] ***Ibid.***, October 1778, 565-66.

atmosphere to toleration that Catholics became the object of violent attacks on their property and their persons.

Concerned Presbyterians in Scotland took similar action, coalescing into an association called the Friends of the Protestant Interest. Because of the riots in Glasgow and Edinburgh, the mandate of this committee was somewhat ambiguous in the eyes of members of the parliamentary Opposition who had supported the relief of Roman Catholics on libertarian grounds. Confusion arose, for example, over a publication which called for the severance of all ties with Roman Catholics. Unlike the earlier pamphlets of Presbyterian ministers in 1778, ***A Letter To All Opposers of the Repeal of the Penal Laws against Papists in Scotland***, published in 1779, recommended that each parish join together to "drop all intercourse with Papists; particularly bearing, that they will not for the future employ Papists in any business whatsoever; that they will not buy nor sell with them, nor willingly keep them company; and that whosoever within their bounds acts contrary to this resolution, shall be reputed as Papists, and dealt with accordingly."[20] In Parliament, Edmund Burke had accused Patrick Bowie, the secretary to the Committee, of having written this tract. In a series of letters to Burke, Patrick Bowie denied any connection with the publication and claimed only one pamphlet for the Committee, called ***A Short View of the Statutes at Present In Force in Scotland against Popery.*** Although the tract was less offensive to Catholics, Edmund Burke described this work as having "an inevitable tendency to produce in the Minds of all, upon whom it could have influence, a disposition to these enormities and Crimes which have lately disgraced our Age and Country."[21] The Committee had expressed its disapproval to the burning of the Roman Catholic Chapel by an angry mob in Edinburgh in a unanimous letter to the ***Caledonian Mercury*** on 3 February 1779. Nonetheless, Burke accused the Committee of not helping to quell the disturbances which gave to the Protestant religion a bad reputation in the view of other countries and challenged the Presbyterian leaders to enlighten rather than to inflame the people.

Outside the Committee's activities, other members of the clergy in the Church of Scotland declared their abhorrence of the riots and clarified their position against Catholic relief. In a letter to Edmund Burke, Dr. John Erskine, member of the Scottish Church, denied all charges that the riots of February in Edinburgh and Glasgow had been provoked by inflammatory sermons and pamphlets of the clergy. He claimed that only three men had published pamphlets and that these men had been

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[20] Cited in John A. Wood, ed., ***Burke's Correspondence***, vol. iv, 55, n. 1.
[21] Burke to Patrick Bowie, 31 March 1779, ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood, ed., vol. iv, .53.

deeply disturbed by the "unchristian and disorderly proceedings."[22] The pamphlets to which he referred had opposed any relaxation of the penal laws toward Catholics on the grounds that a limited toleration did not guarantee the security of the Protestant religion.[23] In a response to Burke, Dr. John Erskine argued that "the pamphlets were calculated to convince men of rank and reflection, that the genius of popery was still the same, by arguments which had no such tendency to work upon the passions, as histories of the events of the last century would have had."[24] According to Erskine, the Scottish clergy had cause for alarm because of "Bp Hays vindication of putting heretics to death, [25] the professed design of allowing Papists to serve in our fleets and armies, the insolence of Roman Catholics in the bounds of the Synod of Glenelg,[26] and the whispers of some of the lower class of them in Edinburgh, that they hoped in two years to see their religion established." The causes for alarm that he listed confirms an naive acceptance of the rumors propagated by the newspapers and all other forms of anti-Catholic propaganda. Nonetheless, despite Erkine's protestations that the pamphleteers had not done anything wrong, it is evident that members of Parliament, particularly of the Opposition, viewed the Scottish Presbyterians as fanatical and irresponsible in their hesitancy to grant Catholics the freedom of conscience deserved under the Constitution of England. To an Administration already anxious because of the wars with America, and with France and Spain in India and the Indies, it may have seemed a simple solution to defer Catholic relief and so avoid widespread resistance.

In the House of Commons on 15 March 1779, John Wilkes, who was less inclined to adopt such a simple solution, showed the first concern about the implications of the resistance in Scotland. Wilkes raised in the Commons the earlier parliamentary commitment to confer upon Scotland a similar Relief Act. The Lord Advocate of Scotland relayed his knowledge of the insurrections in all parts of Scotland and ensured the House that it was "so violent an opposition to the measure..." that the Catholics requested that the measure wait until the prejudices of

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[22] Dr. John Erskine to Burke, 24 April 1779, ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood, ed., vol. iv, 63.
[23] William Porteous, "The Doctrine of Toleration, Applied to the Present Times: in a Sermon...". (Glasgow 1778); Dr. John Macfarlan, "A Defence of the Clergy of the Church of Scotland, who have Appeared in opposition to the Intention of an Unlimited Repeal of the Penal Laws against Roman Catholics" (Edinburgh,1778); Dr. John Erskine, "Considerations on the Spirit of Popery" (Edinburgh, 1778). Cited in Wood, ed., ***Burke's Correspondence***, vol. iv, 63.
[24] Dr. John Erskine to Burke, 21 July 1779, ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood, ed., vol. iv, 103.
[25] Bishop George Hay's pamphlet, " An Answer to Mr. W.A.D.'s Letter to G.H." (Edinburgh 1778), horrified many Presbyterians because of the harsh words used in favor of Roman Catholic Relief in Scotland.
[26] The Synod of Glenelg had discovered that the Roman Catholics had been going to great lengths in order to gain proselytes. See ***Scots Magazine***, July 1778, 565.

the Protestants against them subsided.[27] Wilkes, unimpressed by the Lord Advocate's decision, described the riots and his knowledge of the participation of the magistrates in the acts of violence against the Catholics. He then stated that a precedent was being set by not extending to Scotland the same relief measures as those of Ireland and England -- "that the honor and independency of this House have been meanly sacrificed by the friends of administration to the seditious populace in Scotland." Wilkes further warned that, "An example of a fatal nature has been given by the mobs of Edinburgh and Glasgow to the mob of London to rise, and endeavor by similar outrages to prevent any matter of moment displeasing to them from ever being brought into parliament." The foresight on the part of Wilkes does not necessarily imply that he had any knowledge of the English Protestant position on Catholic relief. Wilkes did, however, possess a keen sense of how popular movements became started, especially when a cause combined liberty and religion. Wilkes had along with other radicals, rallied the dissenting groups against the Government on the popery issue in 1774. He may have suspected that the violent activities in Scotland would stir the Dissenters of England as well as opponents of Government, especially when they learned that Scottish violence had intimidated Parliament into submission on a religious issue.

Apart from Wilkes' discussion of the implications of Scottish resistance to parliamentary authority, the Opposition and the Administration believed that English relief had been a successful policy and widely accepted throughout England and Ireland. Burke bragged in a letter to Dr. John Erskine that:

> You have in Scotland obtained a great Victory over those who differed from you in opinion. In England however we have been still better off; for we have obtained *two* Victories, though indeed of a nature very different from yours--Victories not over our Enemies, but over our own passions and prejudices; having passed, in the last Session, a Bill for the relief of Roman Catholicks; and in the present for the relief of Protestant dissenting Ministers, many of whom are of your particular discipline and persuasion.[28]

If there was any discord toward the Catholic Relief Bill or if, for that matter, the Protestant Association of London was already active in 1779, it had not yet made any impression on Burke. Nor is there any indication in the parliamentary debates that members of Parliament were aware of any opposition in England toward the Bill in 1778 or 1779. Lord George Gordon had opposed the Scottish relief proposals in the

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[27] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xxiii, 280-2.
[28] Burke to Dr. John Erskine, 12 June 1779, ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood, ed., vol. iv, 87.

Commons only twice. The first occasion, on 18 March 1779, Gordon spoke against the expediency of giving toleration to the Roman Catholics of Scotland after Edmund Burke presented the petition of the Roman Catholics of Scotland.[29] The next occasion was initiated by Lord Gordon on 5 May 1779 who asserted more vehemently a motion hostile to the Petition of the Roman Catholics of Scotland as the House was about to adjourn. Lord Gordon declared that the people of Scotland "were ripe for rebellion" and he affirmed that the inhabitants fit to bear arms, "a few Roman Catholics excepted, were ready to resist the powers of government, and had invited him to be their leader or privy-counsellor." He argued that the religious constitution of Scotland was rendered, "sacred against any law the parliament of Great Britain might enact for its alteration," because it was established before the Act of Union.[30] No member seconded his two motions so that the speaker refused to read them and no question was put.[31] The activities of Lord George Gordon as a speaker for a repeal of the English Relief Bill only became apparent in 1780. Most Commoners did not notice the shift of Lord Gordon's support from the Scottish cause to the English issue of repeal of the English Catholic Relief Act.

The origin of the London and Westminster Association has often been linked to Scottish resistance. Contemporary accounts of the London and Westminster Protestant Association have pointed to the Scottish association as the main source of inspiration rather than to any political discord in the lower ranks of English society with the Administration and the war.[32] The fact that the English reaction to the Act came two years following the passage of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill in 1778 suggests that Scottish opposition provided an example for other Protestant groups to follow. Even Lord Gordon had not opposed the English Bill in 1778. In this respect Lord Gordon's connection with the Association in Scotland has been seen as an important aspect of the London organization's formation. Lord Gordon became the

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[29] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xxiii, 327.

[30] ***Ibid.*** vol. xxiii, 622.

[31] Lord Gordon's motions were that the petition from the Roman Catholic lords, Linto and the bishop of Daulis, be "thrown over the table" and that all further proceedings on the Petition be postponed until the 5 August 1779. In ***Ibid.*** , vol. xxiii, 623.

[32] For example, the ***Annual Register*** explained the origins of the Protestant Association in London and Westminster as an emulation of the Scottish association:

> the Successful resistance of the zealots in Scotland to any relaxation of the penal laws against Papists, seems to have given the first rise to the Protestant Association in England: for about the same time bills were dispersed, and advertisements inserted in the newspapers, inviting those who wished well to the cause to unite under that title; and Lord George Gordon, who had been so active at the head of the mal-contents in Scotland, was chosen their president. ***Annual Register***, vol. xxiii, 1780, 256.

spokesperson in Parliament for the Scottish Association in 1779. By 1780, he opposed the Catholic Relief Act and presented the petitions from the various English Associations. His connection with the Scottish cause explains why the London Association, under his leadership, shared characteristics with the Scottish societies. Furthermore, contemporary newspapers, such as the ***Public Advertiser***, carried articles in favor of the Association's anti-Relief Act stance which endorsed Scottish activism against the relaxation of the religious penal laws. One such article, written by a supporter of Lord George Gordon, contained the following passage, using the Scottish experience to justify and to arouse English Protestants into action:

> Did *they* not commune one with one another seriously on the Subject? Did not *they* assemble together in great Multitudes? *They* talked of their Affections being alienated by such an Act; *they* had Recourse to the King's Affidavit at Carleton-House, the 25 of October 1760; *they* cried aloud with one Voice, Let *us* be of *good Courage*! Let *us quit ourselves like Men*! Like Citizens of a Free Government! Like Christians! Like Protestants! Let *us* do our utmost for *our* Country, for *our* People, for the City of *our* God! *And the Lord do that which seemeth Him good*! Now the Scotchmen succeeded.[33]

There were other organizations formed throughout England during roughly the same period as the one lead by Lord Gordon. Once Scottish Relief had been dropped by Parliament the popery alarm in Scotland had faded by June 1779. Gordon then looked to reviving the dying agitation and, according to the Gordon Papers examined by Black, Lord Gordon had even considered an establishment like a Congress or even a Political Presbytery.[34] Not all his Scottish supporters were in favor of expanding the Association to include England because disunity would arise if there was any extension of the Association program. Black claims that Gordon found support in London from the Methodists, enthusiasts, and small segments of the regular clergy who agreed to meet periodically for the purpose of opposing the growth of popery by publishing and by inquiring into the increase of Catholic schools.[35] Using press propaganda, Gordon expanded his enterprise to create new societies to be connected with the parent body in London. He succeeded in stimulating Protestant movements in Canterbury, Rochester, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Bristol, and Bath. These movements were evident during what appeared to be a joint petitioning movement in the early

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[33] ***Public Advertiser***, 25 May 1780.
[34] E. C. Black, ***The Association: British Extraparlaimentary Political Organization 1769-1793***, 149.
[35] ***Ibid.***, 151.

months of 1780 as well as during the June riots in London when the various regions joined the tumults.

The most prominent petition was that of the Protestant Association of London and Westminster. On November 1779, the ***Critical Review*** printed ***An Appeal from the Protestant Association to the People of Great Britain, concerning the probable Tendency of the late Act of Parliament in Favour of the Papists***. The pamphlet's reviewer wrote that the Association claimed not to represent the views of party and did not want to embarrass the measures of Government "at this important crisis", but that the alleged motive of the Association's publication was, "a dread of the bad consequences which may flow from the late act of Parliament in favor of the papists." The publication seemed to weigh the benefits of toleration and all the arguments in favor of the Catholic Relief Act with the consequences which would inevitably result from the measure. The authors concluded on the necessity of an application to Parliament for redress, pointing out the constitutional mode of obtaining it. The reviewer seemed to think that the arguments were "such as have often been repeated."[36] The familiarity of argument resembled that of the proponents of liberty and of the sanctity of constitutional rights and freedoms.

In the month of January, 1780, the Protestant Association made frequent appeals to the public. Lord George Gordon's presidential speech which was made to the Association was published in the ***Public Advertiser*** on 1 January. The object of the Association and the meeting of late December 1779, was to support the Protestant interest as well as to consider an application to Parliament for a repeal of the Roman Catholic Relief Act. At this meeting of the Association, the members agreed to support an address to Lord North to support and to present the Association' s petition for repeal of the Act. The letter that was received by Lord North concluded, "Your Lordship knows that you did not delay a single hour returning me a satisfactory answer, when I had the honour to write to your Lordship on the business of the Committee of Correspondence for the Protestant interest at Edinburgh, and I trust that as you are a friend to the Protestants in London, your Lordship will shew a similar attention to their application." Five days later, the members met again to discuss Lord North's tardy refusal to either present or to support the petition of the Association. In consequence of Lord North's rejection of the terms offered to him by the Association, the members resolved on 6 January 1780 that the president be requested to make an immediate application to their "Protestant Brethren in Scotland,

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[36] ***Critical Review***, November 1779.

to unite with this Association in petitioning Parliament, for a repeal of the late Act in favour of Popery."[37]

The petition that was addressed to the House of Commons in January 1780 requested quite simply that the Act for the relief of the Roman Catholics which was passed in 1778 be repealed. Opponents to the Act rationalized that there had been no opposition to the Act in 1778 because the Bill had been hastily passed before the sense of the nation could be obtained. Furthermore, the Act of 1778 repealed the most important and essential clauses in the statute, rendering the remaining clauses of no effect. The petitioners claimed that the papists construed the indulgence given to them as a toleration of popery. Such a conclusion was made evident by the increase of Mass houses and schools, books and publications being publicly exposed, and instances where bishops, priests, Jesuits and schoolmasters openly exercised their functions, infecting the minds of the people and youth. Because Catholics could purchase lands and tenements and inherit the same, they could influence elections in future Parliaments which would tend to destroy the Constitution. The petitioners asserted that England and Scotland were united, and that it was a hardship for the people of England, "to have Popery countenanced among them by Law, when their brethren in Scotland have been officially assured, that no Law shall be made to favour Popery in that country." The conclusion to the petition stressed that the petitioners did not desire to persecute the papists but rather sought to preserve themselves from a repetition "of these rebellious and bloody scenes, which Popery, under pretense of promoting the interest of the Church, has exhibited in these Kingdoms." Resistance to toleration was therefore justified by the alleged increase of popery magnified by historic accounts of popish inquisitions against Protestants.

Opposition to toleration was also grounded in theological issues. One fact often cited to prove that Catholicism was dangerous to the state, was that a papist, because of the fundamental tenets of the religion itself, could not renounce the supremacy of the Pope or resist the necessity of teaching popish principles to harvest proselytes. Essentially, the problem of creating proselytes for the successful continuation of the religion implied the encouragement and expansion of popery. The most significant show of support in favor of the London and Westminster Association's cause was assumed by John Wesley, leader of the Methodist movement. Wesley presented his case against the Relief Act of 1778 in January 1780 initially in a letter to the printer of the ***Public Advertiser***. The letter was reprinted in the Methodist

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[37] "Protestant Association," ***London Evening Post***, 6-8 January 1780.

journal, ***The Arminian Magazine***,[38] in May 1781 as a means of clarifying his stand on the Protestant Association of London following the riots of June 1780. Wesley had supported the arguments behind the Association's January tract, ***An Appeal from the Protestant Association, to the People of Great Britain***. Wesley insisted that "no Government, not Roman Catholic, ought to tolerate men of the Roman Catholic persuasion." The maxim of the Roman Catholic Church, that "No Faith is to be kept with Heretics" ensured that the members of that church could not give any reasonable security to any Government of their allegiance or peaceable behavior. The Oath of Allegiance provided no guarantee for Government that the Roman Catholics would abide by civil and religious establishment because the Pope's "spiritual power" transcended all aspects of Roman Catholic life. In his letter, Wesley dispelled arguments in favor of the Act which suggested that the measure did not *tolerate* or *encourage* Roman Catholics: "Do not the Romanists themselves understand it as a Toleration? You know they do. And does it not already (let alone what it *may* do by and by) *encourage* them to preach openly, to build Chapels, (at Bath and elsewhere) to raise Seminaries, and to make numerous Converts day by day to their intolerant, persecuting principles?" The alarmist discussion was further enhanced by the claim that instances of popish corruption were "increasing daily."[39] Wesley's position on Roman Catholic relief served to empower the Association's claims that popery was dangerous to the Constitution. Furthermore, his anti-Catholic relief stance encouraged Methodists to enroll in the Associations of England in order to oppose the Act which they deemed threatening to the security of their religion and state.

The property clause which could give Catholics greater political status may have sparked some resentment amongst the landed élite. The landed classes had been benefiting from the earlier penal laws which gave preference to Protestant landowners. Once the laws were lifted and Catholics could buy and inherit land, the privileged and profitable position of the Protestant landowners was weakened. Furthermore, as one devout Protestant stated in the press, "You may see how weak our landed interest is at present in the hands of Protestants, by means of the present dismal war, that many Protestants can scarcely hold their estates and few of their brethren can purchase them." He went on to make his essential point that Papists,

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[38] The full title is: ***The Arminian Magazine: consistency of Extracts and original Treatises on Universal Redemption. The Arminian Magazine*** superseded the ***Methodist Monitor*** in 1778. The editors of the magazine justified their choice of title by claiming that Arminius was a "patron of Particular Redemption." See ***The Arminian Magazine***, May 1778, i-iv.

[39] John Wesley, "In compliance with the request of several Friends, and because of the importance of the Subject to every Protestant-Reader, I here insert the Letter published last year. The Defence of it (in two more Letters,) will be afterwards inserted." ***Ibid.***, May 1781, 239-42.

who had money because they had no land, would purchase Protestant lands, "and it is well known that estates soon become power and influence in a nation."[40] The new economic and potential political status of Catholics may be part of the reasons for the large number of respectable people who joined in opposition to the Act.[41]

A question that has not yet been posed is the reason why the Associations in Scotland and England had so much popular appeal. Anti-Catholic sentiment, prevalent in the British Isles during the 1770's because of the war with France and Spain, certainly must account for part of the social upheaval accompanying the anti-relief discussions. In both the Scottish and English context, the further complicating factor of the Irish trade crisis had burdened policy makers and merchants throughout the 1770's. By the late 1770's, the Irish trade situation worsened requiring the attention of Parliament and further aggravating English and Scottish merchants who resisted any concessions. On 6 May 1778, Earl Nugent spoke out on the conduct of the city of Glasgow, "who had, with the most illiberal sentiments, prayed that neither the present, nor any future advantage should be granted to Ireland", calling them "mean, unmanly, ungenerous, despicable, and even diabolical."[42] The Irish trade crisis and the anti-Irish attitudes revealed by Scottish and English merchants may serve to explain why, for example, there evolved Protestant societies in Bristol, Glasgow and Edinburgh. The issues of Irish free trade preoccupied English politics in November 1779. Lord Rockingham linked the distresses in England in 1779 to the delayed and poor handling of the Irish situation.[43] The success of the Scottish and English Associations in having won popular support for a religious issue was remarkable when one considers that other considerations might have been more important such as defense preparations against a threatened French invasion arising from the American War. Instead, the petitioning movement in London led to social and political upheaval which left the country defenseless and chaotic before the eventuality of war.

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[40] "For the London Evening Post. To All Protestants of Whatsoever Denomination," ***London Evening Post***, 13-15 January 1780.

[41] See George Rudé for an account of the class make-up of the Gordon Riots of June 1780. He claims that the rioters were not rabble but of middle-lower working class, such as bakers and small shop owners. Rudé's study implies that there was a sense amongst many in the crowd that Catholics were better off economically. The respectable gentlemen in the Association may have been aiming for the security of their properties and privileged social positions, against the possibility of ambitious Catholic land owners.

[42] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xix, 1117.

[43] Marquess of Rockingham to Edmund Burke, [3 November 1779], ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood, ed., vol. iv, 162.

Yet, Scottish resistance was less remarkable when one recalls that Scotland had a growing reputation in the 1770's for social unrest. In fact, rioting in Scotland against Catholics coincided with other disaffection with the North Administration in 1779. Lord North's budget proposals of March 1779 proved to be unpopular in many districts of Scotland where the industries were to be affected by a new excise.[44] The Administration had designated a five per cent tax as a surcharge on the former payment on all commodities already subject to customs and all excisable Goods: excluding beer, leather, soap, and candles.[45] What disturbed people most in Scotland, however, was the manner in which the excise was to be collected by means of inspection which on occasion brought the excise officer into the taxpayer's house.[46] The connection between the disapproval of the excise and the religious riots of Edinburgh where numerous Catholics had their properties destroyed was commented on by Edmund Burke: "I think it <behoves> as well to resist an act of Taxation as an act of Toleration; and that it would hurt me rather more to have the Excise in my own house, than the Mass in my Neighbours."[47] The riots in the city of Glasgow against Catholics also coincided with the Administration's proposal to allow the importation of cambrics, already a major part of Glasgow's industry. According to the ***St. James's Chronicle*** of 18-20 March 1779, an effigy of Lord North was burnt by the weavers of Glasgow.[48] In the end, this opposition halted further suggestion that cambrics be imported to that region. The social and economic factors may have made the region more susceptible to revolt.

Both the purpose of resistance and the outcome of the riots were similar in Scotland and England. The main difference between the organizations in Scotland and England against the relaxation of the religious penal laws, however, was that the Scottish Association had been a church network in the established Church of Scotland the specific concern for the Protestant religion. The Association viewed its victory against the proposed relaxation of the religious penal laws as a successful counterattack to the potential dangers of an unlimited toleration of popery. The London and Westminster Association encompassed the views of a political rather than a religious élite, of which the majority were Protestant Dissenters. The English Protestant Dissenters had aligned themselves and their cause of greater religious

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[44] For the debate on the Budget of 6 March 1779, see W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xxi, 154-170.
[45] Woods, ed., ***Burke's Correspondence***, vol. iv,47.
[46] ***Ibid.***, vol. iv, 46. n. 1.
[47] Burke to James Boswell, 1 March 1779, ***Ibid.***, vol. iv, 45-6.
[48] Cited in ***Ibid.***, vol. iv, 48.

toleration within the political framework of England as early as 1770. The failed attempt for religious toleration in 1771 had proven that religious argument could not succeed alone in convincing members of Parliament to embrace a more liberal interpretation of the established religion. The Feathers Tavern rallies, where Dissenters gathered to plan their petitions and to rally popular support, did serve to increase awareness that the dissenting groups intended to continue to pursue of legitimizing their religion. The rallies, however, remained small and exclusive, only winning the support of a few members of Parliament, the most well known being Sir George Savile. The association principle offered Dissenters the opportunity to exercise political influence in the pursuit of both political and religious rights. The elections of 1774 had provided a similar forum where Dissenters attacked the Administration for what appeared to be preferential treatment of Roman Catholics in Quebec who obtained the establishment of their religion.

The Protestant Association, because it was not specific to the dissenting cause, attracted a variety of denominations, including members of the established church. Radicals, who shared the view that Catholicism was dangerous to the Constitution, would have also been attracted to the organization. The Association thus embodied the dissenting cause and the radical political movement which shared a common purpose, that of resisting the war with America, challenging arbitrary Government, and supporting reform in religion and State. It is not surprising, then, that the Association, comprised of both radicals and Dissenters, gave the impression that it was largely formed with political intent in order to challenge Government, rather than for any immediate concern that the Protestant religion was threatened. Furthermore, any hopes that Gordon may have entertained to include the Scottish organization ended with what Black called Lord Gordon's tendencies of revolution which the Scottish Association viewed as contrary to their real purpose -- religion.[49]

Furthermore, unlike the Scottish Associations, the Protestant Associations of England were active amidst general elections. One might conclude that the Association principle adopted by Lord Gordon and its participants was not unlike Christopher Wyvill's Yorkshire Association for reform. Both associations originating in 1779 sought membership as well as support for a political cause during the elections when popular interest was already engaged. It is therefore possible that the Protestant Association had gained momentum from a practice already supported by parliamentary reformers. The association principle was considered to be an effective means of shaping Government policy through popular support. Like the elections of

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[49] E. C. Black, ***The Association: British Extraparliamentary Political Organization 1769-1793***, 151.

1774, the elections of 1780 made it easier to rally the populace particularly on a religious issue.

In the ***Public Advertiser*** of 22 May 1780, fourteen reasons were printed for repealing the Catholic Relief Act. The list of reasons was a repetition of the Association's earlier petition with the added bonus of benefiting from Wesley's arguments against a relaxation of the penal laws. The list also serves as an example of the political intent of the radical supporters of the Association's cause. At the top of the list, the claim was made that the Act was inconsistent with the principles of the Revolution. The purchasing of land gave papists greater influence within the state and emboldened them to canvass support of candidates at the ensuing elections. The list asserted that papists could give no guarantee to the state of their peaceable behaviour, had been encouraged to open schools "and to instruct the Children of Protestants." Jesuits, "expelled from Roman Catholic Kingdoms, and declared by the Parliament of Paris 'to be Corrupters of Youth, Disturbers of public peace and enemies of King and State'" found asylum in England. The alarming list reiterated that papists were "perverting many from the Protestant Religion" by their preaching and publishing of books: "Papists have, *de Facto*, a more extensive religious Toleration than Protestant Dissenters, the latter being limited to the Canonical Scriptures, the former permitted to teach at large whatever Opinions are embraced by their Church." Protestants of Scotland had been assured that there would be no relaxation of the religious penal laws so that the Relief Act should be repealed for the same reasons. A more basic argument for repeal claimed that the Act "has a tendency to inflame the Minds of the People, and disturb our internal Peace; especially considering the Zeal and Activity with which the Papists seem to be determined to propagate their opinions." The final point, a reminder to politicians of their real duties, "the legal maintenance of the Protestant Religion, and the fullest security of its Professors against the Tyranny, Cruelty, and Perfidy of Papists, is a principal object of policy, and a distinguished and essential part of our happy Constitution." It was further stressed in the last point that "as the Religion of the Papists cannot thrive, but at the Expense of that of Protestants, so whatever legal Countenance is given to the one, must be withdrawn and torn from the other."[50]

Indeed, the Protestant Association's aim was more difficult to achieve than that of the Association in Scotland because it had to achieve a repeal of the 1778 Act rather than prevent a policy from becoming law. As a political organization, the aim was to increase membership and to apply pressure on Government, making use of the

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[50] ***Public Advertiser***, 22 May 1780.

ensuing general elections. Lord Gordon had advertised that he would not present the Association's petition unless he was met by 20,000 people in St. George's Fields on 2 June.[51] Already, St. George's Fields appealed to the historic sensibilities of the radical component and may have drawn larger crowds in that area of London than anywhere else.[52] The editor of the ***Town and Country Magazine*** pointedly raised the question "whether his lordship meant to renew the prejudices raised against Government, by the military acting there some years since, and thereby intimidate administration from sending troops to disperse the mob..."[53] Other symbolic gestures were used as a drawing and unifying mechanism for the crowd such as the insistence of Lord Gordon that "all true Protestants" distinguish themselves by blue cockades in their hats and that petitioners dress in respectable attire.[54] According to the Attorney General, Wallace, at Lord Gordon's trial in 1781, Lord Gordon had also requested in an advertisement for the day of the petition that the body of men be organized in four divisions: "the London to the right, the Scotch division to the left, and the Westminster to one part, and the Southwark division in another".[55] The bagpipes from the Scottish division would have drawn more people into the crowds already progressing toward Westminster.

The alarmist nature of the petitions, pamphlets and shorter articles previously discussed appear to be characteristic of only the radical newspapers. Such radical newspapers as the ***London Evening Post*** and the ***Public Advertiser*** printed numerous summaries which claimed that there was a rapid increase in the number of papists in the Kingdom.[56] The more moderate newspapers and magazines, such as the ***Gentleman's Magazine***, dutifully reported the riots in Scotland and printed, at most, the advertisements of the London and Westminster Association without the alarmist tone. Other papers and magazines did not represent the voice of the Association at all. The ***Town and Country Magazine***, for example, tended to be more daring in its reporting, having published accounts in support of Roman Catholics of Scotland following the riots of 1778 and 1779 as well as later accounts

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[51] Proceedings against Lord George Gordon for High Treason, 1781. ***A Complete Collection of State Trials and proceedings for high treason and other crimes and misdemeanors from the earliest period to the present time***, Thomas Bayly Howell, ed., (London: Longmans, 1816-28), vol. xxi, 520.

[52] In May 1768, demonstrations in support of John Wilkes in London resulted in what was to be called the "Massacre of St. George's Fields". 11 of Wilkes' supporters were killed by soldiers when demonstrating outside the King's Bench Prison.

[53] ***Town and Country Magazine***, June 1780, 284.

[54] Proceedings against Lord George Gordon for High Treason, 1781. ***A Complete Collection of State Trials***, T.B. Howell, ed., vol. xxi, 523.

[55] ***Ibid.***, vol. xxi, 503.

[56] The ***Public Advertiser*** claimed that there was an increase of 30,000 Papists in England within a nine year period. See ***Public Advertiser***, 1 June 1780.

accusing the Association of having misled the people following the riots of June 1780.[57] The ***Critical Review***, which was under Tory and Church patronage, tended to counter the trends of other newspapers who generously reviewed the pamphlets and Addresses of the Association published in 1780. In the ***Critical Review***, a large summary of a pamphlet opposing the appeal made by the Protestant Association in January of 1780 claimed that the Association's criticism of the Relief Act was without foundation.[58]

The radical newspapers of London were leading factors to the increase of popular support for the Association in the month of June 1780. Radical newspapers glorified the presentation of the Association's petition on 2 June. It was described as the largest petition ever to be presented to the British House of Parliament, being several scrolls with 20,000 signatures. "It was a glorious and most affecting spectacle to see such numbers of our fellow citizens advancing in the cause of Protestantism, which our Protestant Bishops have so meanly and infamously deserted."[59] The same article in the ***London Evening Post*** praised the Duke of Gloucester, Dukes of Devonshire, Richmond, Roxburgh, Earl of Shelburne, Lord Camden, the Bishop of Peterborough as "patriotic noblemen" and described the treatment by the crowd, "their carriages [were] conducted with great respect and honour to the door of the House." The Duke of Gloucester fulfilled his loyal duties before the public and wooed the crowd: "Gentlemen, while I have life I will espouse the cause of the Protestant religion and British liberty." Yet, while this picture was presented as a glorious day for England, the events soon became tragic. The radical newspapers did not report the riots in any depth, other than in the parliamentary debates, until a few days had passed. The lack of editorial commentary may have been the result of confusion as to the implications of the riots relative to the newspapers' connection with the Association. Furthermore, the radicals themselves were divided following the riots, re-examining the importance of the crowd in their politics.[60]

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[57] "A memorial to the public, in Behalf of the Roman Catholics of Edinburgh and Glasgow, " "Considerations on the State of the Roman Catholics in Scotland" in ***Town and Country Magazine***, May 1779; and "An essay showing the extreme Ignorance of the late Rioters and Patrons" ***Ibid.***, October 1780.

[58] "A defence of an Act of Parliament lately passed for the Relief of Roman Catholics," ***Critical Review***, January 1780.

[59] ***The London Evening Post***, 1-3 June 1780.

[60] Most importantly, Nicholas Rogers claims that the radicals, especially during the riots, had achieved some distance from the Protestant Association and therefore distanced themselves from the events in early June. Radicals might have denounced the Association, evidence does suggest, however, that many were inclined to defend the "purpose" of the Association which was to present the petitions of the people. See Nicholas Rogers, "Crowd and People in the Gordon Riots," ***The Transformation of***

After the Gordon riots, the Association dissolved with the arrest of Lord Gordon, who had been taken under custody for waging war against the monarch and was imprisoned in the tower. Rioters who had also been arrested faced more serious charges ending in several executions. Few supporters of the Association came forward to defend their leader or the cause. Indeed, this tends to suggest that many people who had participated in the crowd on 2 June had just rioted for the sake of it. The purpose of the Association had, it seems, become obscured by the details of the terrible riots which had threatened the civil establishment, an effect which had not been intended by the proponents of the preservation of the Constitution. Furthermore, the violent attacks made against Catholics drew sympathy and shame from many Protestants, which in turn stimulated a second campaign in favor of the Catholic Relief Act . Sermons were preached to convince parishioners that the Relief Act could pose no harm to the Protestant Cause.[61] It was even argued that the Protestant religion had not been concerned in the disturbances and that the petition of the Association had been unrepresentative of Protestants at large.[62] The ***Critical Review*** recommended to its readers countless pamphlets accusing the petitioners of ignorance concerning the practices of Roman Catholics and the purpose of the Relief Act. One pamphlet presented a rhetorical analysis of the historic events generally used in opposition to the Act by claiming that the religious disturbance of June had been no different from those during the reign of Charles I and the riots in Scotland in 1779. The author charged that the disturbances had been "occasioned by a groundless alarm that an unlimited toleration of popery was intended by government."[63] The ***Town and Country Magazine*** also listed several tracts which aimed to discredit the reasoning supported by the Protestant Association against the Relief Act. William Jesse, a vicar of Hutton Cranswick, wrote in a remonstrance to the Protestant Association that the organization had falsely used religion as a mechanism of persecution:

> But whereas you call it a Protestant Association, and profess a concern for Christianity, as a chief ground of your proceedings, and the sacred name of religion is your pretense, and in the name of my master thunder both civil and ecclesiastical excommunication against those who differ from you in religious opinions and practices, and your

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Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century, Eckhart Hellmuth, ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1990), 45 and 50.

61 Andrew Burnaby, "A Sermon upon religious Zeal, preached in Greenwich Church, June 11, 1780, and addressed to every Protestant Subject in the Realm, "***Critical Review***, June 1780, 471.

62 "Considerations on the late Disturbances, by a Consistent Whig," ***Ibid.***, June 1780, 470.

63 "Fanaticism and Treason: or, a Dispassionate History of the Rise, Progress, and Suppression of the Rebellions Insurrections in June, 1780," ***Ibid.***, June 1780, 470.

> appeal breathes the spirit of persecution against those how you anathematize as idolaters, who are to be disfranchised as citizens, their mouths to be gagged, and their worship according to conscience suppressed...I am alarmed, because I think your conduct quite opposite to the gospel...[64]

Wesley too denied having ever defended the Associations "anywhere" in England. He did admit openly that he did not find it safe to tolerate Roman Catholics. "But still I would not have them persecuted; I wish them to enjoy the same liberty, civil and religious, which they enjoyed in England, before the late Act was repealed. Mean time, I would not have a sword put into their hands; I would not give them liberty to hurt others."[65] Wesley's honesty reveals that he, and most likely other Protestants as well, continued to support the notion that Catholicism necessitated a limited toleration for the security of the state. According to this view, the riots only confirmed that a liberal toleration of Catholicism unleashed social evils which threatened the Constitution in Church and State.

Radical newspapers also printed articles which denounced the riots as unconstitutional and counter-productive. Dissenters were accused of being disloyal subjects and "ingrates" who were allowed by the Act of Toleration to exercise their form of worship and "who would refuse a like liberty to the Roman Catholicks."[66] On the whole, however, blame was turned toward Government for having in some way instigated the popular tumults by having ignored the petitions in the first place. In fact, many radical thinkers argued that the riots served as an excuse to avoid the real issue, the security of the Protestant religion, espoused by the Association.[67] The Association and the riots had in some way generated and represented the consensus of the people, raising awareness that the liberty of Protestants had been endangered by the Roman Catholic relief. Furthermore, the inaction of Government in not repealing the Act in response to the petitions of the people played into the hands of the radicals. By emphasizing that the Association had accomplished its primary goal, to make Parliament listen to popular demands and achieve better security for the Protestant religion. In the fall months of 1780, radicals persisted in their claims that the civil and religious establishment remained unprotected against the corruption of the current Government.

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[64] ***Town and Country Magazine***, June 1780, 325.
[65] "On Popery. {Two Letters to the Editors of the Freeman's Journal.}," ***The Arminian Magazine***, June 1781, 300.
[66] "To the Protestants of the Church of England," ***Public Advertiser***, 4 July 1780.
[67] J.A., "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser, " ***Ibid.***, 19 June 1780.

At first glance, the riots appeared to have dissipated the Protestant movement in England. Although the London and Westminster Association crumbled into non-existence, it was reported in late June that Protestant Associations from other counties would continue to meet. One member avowed that "We have some of the ablest and wealthiest at the Head of the County Meetings and who will direct in Prudence, and act with Vigour...And these are the Men who would most surely feel the Encroachments, the Dominion of a single person, would induce."[68] In this instance, the failure of the London and Westminster Association had been the result of poor leadership in the person of Lord Gordon. The most significant point to be made, however, is that the Protestant movement in other counties was not intimidated by the London experience. Nor was it found at the elections in London that the Protestant cause in London had been completely extinguished by the riots. In the elections of 1780 do reveal that religion was once again brought to the forefront of popular concern despite the disillusionment of many Protestants following the disturbances which ruined the properties of many Members of Parliament and many Roman Catholics. Radical newspapers, such as the ***London Evening Post*** and the ***Public Advertiser*** were key in raising from the rubble the essence of the Association's cause, despite the criticism of the Association's involvement in the London riots and helped to revive the anti-Catholic movement in time to have an impact at the general elections in September 1780.

The elections of 1780 may be characterized by two points. Lord North had called an election one year before an election was due under the Septennial Act. The standard reason given by historians, such as Namier and Brooke, for North having chosen to dissolve Parliament before it was due to his own fatigue with the American war, the events in Ireland, and the shock over the Gordon Riots. According to Namier and Brooke, at the end of June North made two decisions: the first was to open negotiations with Rockingham for a coalition Administration and the other was the dissolution of Parliament. The Rockingham negotiations failed. North may have decided to call an early election in the same month following the riots to use the Catholic issue against the Opposition as the Quebec Act had been used against the Administration in 1774. The timing did prove to work in favor of the Administration, thought only marginally, allowing it to consolidate enough seats to form a Government .[69]

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[68] "For the Public Advertiser to the People," ***Ibid.***, 27 June 1780.

[69] Namier and Brooke cite the numbers of John Robinson who was drawing up the survey of Government before the elections. He had reckoned there to be 290 supporters of Government and 233 supporters of Opposition. Even though the North Administration won the elections, they ended with a

Second, while the Opposition, both Whigs and radicals, improved its number of seats since the 1774 elections, the Catholic Relief Act proved to be very difficult for returning Members of Parliament. Various individuals were singled out and harassed throughout their campaign for their support of the Act. In a letter to Sir George Savile, who was off campaigning in Leeds, Rockingham warned that "the nonsense about the danger of Popery, and the politics of Mr. Wesley, were likely enough to be played off against you."[70] Fortunately for Savile, his eager support of the Yorkshire Association may have redeemed him in the eyes of the public for there is no indication that religion posed any problems for him.[71] Nonetheless, it is clear that Rockingham was aware that the Methodists wielded a good deal of power, as he went on to say that "I assure you, in this neighbourhood, I had particularly desired that there should be much alertness in securing all freeholders, and especially those who were supposed to be Methodists..."

Other Opposition members were not so lucky. There had been some question throughout the campaign as to whether or not Edmund Burke would regain his seat at Bristol. His opponents attacked him on three controversial points: for his having helped to remove the restrictions on Irish trade, for his refusal to oppose Lord Beauchamp's Bill for higher taxes, and for his advocacy of toleration for Roman Catholics. In the end, Burke declined the contest. While he "was ably supported by the Wealthy and Respectable, he had but a small share of the Favours of the Populace."[72] He went on to take a seat at Malton later in December of 1780. At Westminster, Charles James Fox was persistently accused about his support of the Roman Catholic Relief Act.[73] Fox's opponent, Lord Thomas Pelham Clinton, used the Catholic issue to discredit Fox and his reform mandate. As one of Clintin's supporters wrote at the time, "How can the Electors of Westminster trust to the Sincerity of a Man, who has not the necessary Prudence to preserve *even* the Appearance of [repentance], while he solicits their Confidence? ... is it possible for any Man in his Senses to believe, that you are a fit Person to be entrusted with the Care of the Civil and Religious Rights of your Country?"[74]

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slight majority. Namier and Brooke do, however, concede that the Government had been widely mislead by these rough calculations. L. Namier and J. Brooke, ***The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790,*** vol. 1, 82.

[70] H.M.C. ***Right Hon. F.J. Savile Foljambe***, 156.

[71] The Yorkshire Association, begun in 1779, was headed by Christopher Wyvill. The Association had initiated a petitioning campaign for reform.

[72] ***Public Advertiser***, 17 September 1780.

[73] ***Ibid.***, 11 September 1780.

[74] "For the Public Advertiser to the Hon. Mr. FOX," ***Ibid.***, 22 September 1780.

The London Livery claimed that it would only support men, "who respect our Laws, or venerate our Religion", urging others " to be extremely cautious of sending up to Parliament a Representative whose Republican Principles threaten the former, and whose late Exertions to introduce Popery, are too strong and evident Marks of his Disregard for the latter. "[75] Despite his honest speech and apology to the Livery of the City of London renouncing the irresponsible actions of Parliament with regards to the popery Bill, John Sawbridge, a Radical, lost the election to an Administration supporter.[76] After having lost his seat to the Opposition, Edward Gibbon implied in his memoirs that he had been attacked for his defense of toleration in the last session of Parliament. His ***Decline and Fall*** was also generating attacks: "My Ecclesiastical history still breathed the same spirit of freedom: but Protestant Zeal is more indifferent to the characters and controversies of the fourth and fifth Centuries."[77]

The historian Nicholas Rogers has argued that the agitation to repeal the Roman Catholic Relief Act posed a series of problems for the radicals who became divided after the riots on libertarian ideology and the mobilization of the mass platform.[78] The issue forced upon the radicals a split between two of its leading and founding figures, John Wilkes and Frederick Bull. John Wilkes, the champion of liberty in 1760's had been outraged by the intimidation tactics of the crowd and Lord Gordon against Parliament. On the other hand, Alderman Frederick Bull, once a colleague of Wilkes in the 1774 campaign, seconded the motion made by Lord Gordon to present the petition from the Protestant Association. Bull, who had supported a repeal of the Act, argued that the Relief Act was similar to the Quebec Act in that it established popery in Britain. John Wilkes was therefore attacked by Bull's supporters during the elections for his complicity with Government on the Relief Act. Bull was applauded for his position on the Relief Act, while Wilkes was denigrated politically in popular opinion: "Yes, Mr. Bull is an honest, and therefore honourable Man. Mr. Bull has Reason to congratulate himself on being separated from the Contagion of such Baseness and Profligacy. This is not the first Time Mr. Wilkes has spurned the Ladder by which he ascended."[79] Harsher comments followed:

> Thine active Zeal let other Pens commend,
> I'll praise the Man who is his Country's Friend;

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[75] ***Ibid.***, 11 September 1780.
[76] ***London Evening Post***, 9-12 September 1780.
[77] George A. Bonnard, ed., ***Edward Gibbon: Memoirs of My Life***, 162.
[78] Nicholas Rogers, "Crowd and People in the Gordon Riots," 41.
[79] ***Public Advertiser***, 28 June 1780.

Who dares consign Religion to the Flame,
That man ill deserves the Patriot's Name.
Let Popish hirelings varnish o'er thy Crimes...[80]

At the meeting of the Freeholders of Middlesex in September 1780, a member arose in opposition to the nomination of Wilkes as a representative. His principal objections were that Wilkes had supported Roman Catholic relief and had opposed the presentation of the Protestant petitions.[81] Wilkes defended himself on the grounds that he supported universal toleration and that he wished to put an end to all persecution whatsoever, "that the mildness of the Church of England should gain over to her interest Dissenters of all denominations." He succeeded in garnering enough votes to take his seat again for Middlesex, although his popular support had dropped from 1774.

On balance, it appears that the districts where the Protestant Associations had been strongest harbored a persistent anti-Catholic sentiment. In those districts, such as London, Westminster, Bristol, the issue of religion was forced upon the candidates who had voted in favor of the Bill. Like the Quebec Act in 1774, the Catholic Relief Act was discussed widely in those districts with a strong radical component. The Opposition experienced fewer of the attacks over the religious legislation than had the Administration in 1774. The effect of the Quebec Act, although it had produced a lot of clamor, had been exaggerated by the Administration's American policy. Radicals continued to benefit from anti-Catholic sentiment during the campaign so it is not surprising to find numerous articles in the ***Public Advertiser*** which stirred up the populace with rumors of another Bill for the Relief of Roman Catholics or that Catholics had given their votes to Burke and Fox. Nonetheless, one can conclude from the strong membership in the Association and the 1780 elections that the Catholic question remained a concern mainly of the Dissenters.

Finally, the Protestant Dissenters' challenge to Catholic relief raised issues of religion amidst the Opposition's push for reform. The Methodists under Wesley, for example, supported a return to purity for the Church of England, upholding revolution principles in religious practice. The talk of parliamentary reform which had been first raised by Dunning in 1780, raised questions as to the status of the Church in a reformed Parliament. Members of the Church of England, as well as many Methodists, may have opposed the reform movement set in motion by the Rockingham group. Not only had members of the Opposition designed the Catholic

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[80] ***Ibid.***, 6 July 1780.
[81] ***Ibid.***, 14 September 1780.

relief measure in 1778, but their reform policies moved away from the tenets of the 1688 Revolution that Religion and State were indissolubly linked. A devout member of the Church of England wrote in the ***Public Advertiser*** in 1779 that the friends to civil Government showed little regard for the ecclesiastical constitution, which the member argued was one and the same.[82] Disturbed by the speeches in Parliament of General Conway and Charles James Fox urging the exclusion of the Bishops from having seats in the Upper House, he declared that "I sincerely own I can not help being alarmed for the Fate of Religion in particular." A Scottish correspondent also remarked, "how different a Spirit and Principles were the Legislators and Patriots of other Times."[83] He claimed that religion had once been dearer to legislators than the cause of civil liberty. The trend toward secularization in state affairs disturbed many pious churchgoers whose view of the constitution included religious conscience.

The parliamentary Opposition's apparent disregard of the Protestant petitions in 1780 cast doubt on the sincerity of their intention to represent the interests of the people. The Opposition, both radical and traditional Whigs, had enjoyed widespread popular support during the 1770's because of its anti-war and anti-administration stance. The Rockingham Whigs and Chathamites had since the early 1770's supported expanded toleration for Protestant Dissenters in order to gain the support of that large body.

The decline of dissenting support may have begun with the Dissenters Relief Act of 1779. John Palmer, a Protestant Dissenter himself, viewed the Act as inconsistent with any notion of toleration espoused by dissenting groups in the late 1770's:

> that the true principles of Protestant dissent consists in a total denial of the magistrate's right of interference in the matters of religious faith and opinion; ...that the dissenter is not obliged to the legislature for extending the act of toleration, and requiring only a general declaration of his faith in the holy scriptures; that he expects as much favour in the state, and as much protection in the public exercise of his ministry, without any declaration of his Christian faith, as a clergyman of the church of England is content to receive, upon terms which are certainly very reasonable, an open and explicit avowal of his religious opinions.[84]

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[82] "To all Good Members; of the Church of England," ***Ibid.***, 17 May 1780.

[83] ***Ibid.***, 29 May 1780.

[84] John Palmer "Free Thoughts on the Inconsistency of conforming to any Religious Test, as a Condition of Toleration, with the true Principle of Protestant Dissent" in ***Critical Review***, May 1779, 398.

For the Opposition to have supported a policy considered by many as a token grant following Roman Catholic relief or as outdated with the current concerns of Protestant Dissenters, may have weakened that important connection which the Duke of Richmond, for example, had so eagerly tried to exploit.

It is clear that Protestant Dissenters supported a very liberal and far reaching toleration for themselves on the grounds that their religions, grounded on Protestant values and beliefs, tolerated other religions. Popery, it was argued, could not, nor had it ever in the history of Great Britain, tolerated or peacefully co-existed with Protestantism. The more conservative of the dissenting groups, such as the Methodists, could not philosophically endure reform of the penal laws in favor of Roman Catholics. Dissenters supported the Revolution Settlement because it favored Protestant Dissenters over Roman Catholics in that it emphasized an equality with the established church on the basis that they were Protestants. The Settlement, however, was not enough, because it did not grant them the necessary toleration to give them full recognition before the State. In order to present their case in favor of the Dissenters' Relief Bill of 1779, the Opposition had to argue that relief had been granted to the Roman Catholics as a dissenting group. Having formally established that Catholics and Protestant Dissenters shared a common identity as non-conformists, Catholic relief upped the Dissenters' demands for greater status in the religious establishment. It also forced Protestant Dissenters to assert their Protestantism over Catholics.

In May 1780, the reformation of Parliament recommended by the Opposition did not necessarily appeal to all who supported reform. The radicals primarily supported a reform which respected the original principles of the Revolution of 1688. Lord George Gordon also supported reform, but did not believe that the Rockingham Whigs or the Shelburne group were dealing with the issues at large. On one occasion Lord Gordon charged the reformers with talking finances when the petitions of the people remained unaddressed. He had further accused the Opposition of having no firmness or unanimity. He claimed that the Opposition was tied to party rather than to the people; consequently, he declared, "The people... had no confidence in the great leaders of opposition in that House."[85] Lord Gordon's formal declaration that he severed all ties with those that he once had supported, forced the Protestant Association to become a political body representative of the people and of the old settlement in Church and State of the 1680's.

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[85] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol.xxi, 537.

Thus, part of the appeal of the Associations in England for Dissenters and radicals alike was that they effectively introduced the notion of liberty and public opinion into politics. The endeavors of the Association, one Englishman wrote, "to oppose the Designs of Popery and Slavery in these Kingdoms, so necessary a measure deserves, and that the success of it may furnish an additional proof of the Efficacy of Applications to Parliament in the redressing of publick Grievances."[86] It was the right of all Englishmen to present their petitions. It was, however, novel for the times to insist that petitioners accompany their document to Parliament in order to ensure that it be read. Indeed, Lord Gordon and the London Association had realized that the number of signatures and public attendance on 2 June 1780 would show Parliament that the petitions held true to public opinion. As it turned out, one can not conclude from the attendance that day that public opinion was represented. The pomp and circumstance of the march to Westminster would have aroused the masses of London no matter what the cause. One can conclude from the number of signatures on the petition as well as from the number of Associations scattered in England, however, that a large part of English society resisted change in religion and state.

Members of Parliament certainly learned from the events of June 1780 how they had misread the conservatism of the times. The Duke of Manchester wrote:

> When the Act complained of passed in our House, I made no opposition to it, as I was willing, on general principles of Toleration, to do every justice to Roman Catholics; but I had doubts that the Legislature was going too far, further than the times would bear; the event has proved it.[87]

The Gordon Riots meant that Parliament had had to confront the Catholic question once again. This time, politicians carefully debated the principle of toleration in the context of Constitutional reform.

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86 ***Public Advertiser***, 19 May 1780.

87 The Duke of Manchester to the Marquis of Rockingham, 8 June 1780, ***Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and his Contemporaries***, George Thomas, Earl of Albemarle, ed., vol. 2, 417.

Chapter IV
Toleration and the security of the Protestant religion

It is clear from the previous chapter that several assumptions made by parliamentarians had impaired their judgment of the social implications of Catholic Relief. The first was that because English and Irish relief had been a policy designed by the parliamentary Opposition and achieved with overwhelming majority support in Parliament, there would be no opposition. The political climate in England and Ireland seemed hospitable to the enlightenment of the age. The second assumption made was that Scottish resistance to relief was unique to the religious and social temperament of Scotland, where Presbyterian fanatics objected to a relaxation of the penal laws because popery still presented a threat to the Protestant religion. England and Ireland had passed their legislation because the political elite in both Kingdoms accepted toleration as a principle to be applied to the Constitution in Church and state. Finally, Parliament assumed that the petitions of 1780 against the Relief Act represented only a minority of the popular opinion on the measure. Parliamentarians did not predict the strength of the opposition to what they deemed as a minimal measure. In fact, many Members did not view the Relief Act of 1778 as a toleration of Catholicism but rather a simple repeal of some of the unnecessary and more damaging clauses of the earlier religious penal laws.

The Gordon riots of 1780 forced Parliament to reconsider its earlier assumptions about the temperament of the age. The insuing debates in Parliament took place amidst the clamor of the riotous mobs in London and were imbued with the anxiety and disgust of the Members at the dangerous predicament facing Parliament. Under the immediate pressures of the tumult outside the palace of Westminster, both the Commoners and the Peers discussed their options. Given the circumstances, many Commoners supported the idea of attending to the Protestant Associations' petitions and of considering the repeal of the Relief Act in order to appease the mob. The majority, however, refused to compromise the integrity of Parliament by yielding parliamentary authority to the pressures of the mob. In a heated debate in the Lords on 3 June 1780, the Shelburne group attacked the Administration and in so doing, to blame the Quebec Act for the disturbances, while defending the Opposition's own Catholic relief measure. The Duke of Richmond and the Earl of Shelburne recommended that the Administration accept its dues and repeal the Quebec Act. While the Quebec Act was made into an issue by a small élite, the

return of the Quebec Act into discussions of the state of the nation raises some important questions as to the philosophical relationship it shared with the 1778 policy of Catholic Relief. In particular, a distinction was still to be made between established and tolerated religion. It was argued that the Quebec Act established Catholicism while the Relief Act merely tolerated it. The radicals were still able to benefit from the philosophical equation of established and tolerated religion in that the Quebec Act suggested a need for reform as the remedy for the Constitution's malady.

Between 2 June and 20 June 1780, Parliament received three major petitions requesting the repeal of the Catholic Relief Act.[1] It was agreed upon in the House of Commons on 6 June that a committee would inquire into the petitions once the tumults had subsided. According to the resolve of the House on 20 June 1780, the chair of the Committee, Welbore Ellis, moved to bring in a bill to ***secure the Protestant Religion in Great Britain from any Encroachments of Popery, by more effectually restraining Papists, or person professing the Popish Religion, from teaching, or taking upon themselves the Education or Government of, the Children of Protestants***. The Restraining Bill Against Catholics was passed in the Commons but rejected by the Lords. Parliament was immediately prorogued.

Even though Parliament debated the motion on the securing of the Protestant religion, Westminster was not persuaded that popery presented any danger to the state, but rather that the prejudices of the mob threatened to encroach upon legislative authority over England's civil and religious establishment. Despite the dangers of the riots, Members of both Houses reiterated their support for the Relief Act. According to the ***London Chronicle***, Edmund Burke stood before a crowd of petitioners on 2 June and proclaimed that "he had seconded the motion for the Bill, and that he thought himself justified in doing so."[2] Parliamentarians were prepared to acknowledge that they had underestimated the power of superstition in the age, but they would not renounce their faith in a policy which had been expedient in light of the Irish situation as well as just with regards to religious conscience.

The discussions in Parliament which followed the riots on 19 June, 1780, will be discussed in terms of the parliamentary debates on religious toleration and the need for reform. The attack made on the Quebec Act and the Catholic Relief Act shows that toleration was a fluid concept, fluctuating between philosophical intent and an

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[1] The Petitions that were read in Parliament were: London and Westminster on 2 June 1780; Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 6 June 1780; and Helmsley Blackamore, Yorkshire on 19 June 1780. See ***Journals of the House of Commons***, vol. xxxvii, 901, 903, 907.

[2] ***London Chronicle*** cited in W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xxi, 662.

evolving legal meaning. Parliamentarians were able to defend Roman Catholic Relief by arguing that the petitioners had misunderstood the purpose of the 1778 Act. In consequence of the debates on the securing of the Protestant religion, Westminster sought to clarify the relief measure, arguing that it granted a limited toleration. A practical definition of the notion of toleration after the riots was the relaxation of the religious penal laws against Roman Catholics, hindering the free exercise of religious conscience and preventing the inheritance and selling of property. Parliament had never sanctioned the notion that Catholics could freely teach Protestant children. The experience of the riots helped to harden philosophical claims in favor of religious toleration, but with the view that it remain within the guidelines of social tolerance.

The attack on Government by the tumultuous crowds in June 1780 inevitably raised the question of blame. The consensus in both Houses of Parliament was that the Administration had been negligent in its duty of preventing such uprisings from getting out of hand. Had, for example, the Administration convened the civil power upon the expectation, fostered by the advertisements of the Protestant Association, that there would be a large assembly gathering to present the petition, could the disturbances have been prevented? After having called the Justices of the Peace to the Bar on 2 June 1780, it had been determined that the Ministry had not told the Justices to attend to the Association's gathering nor had they been ordered to be assembled in the event that there was rioting.[3]

On the second day of the London riots, 3 June, the Administration was assailed by the Duke of Richmond and the Earl of Shelburne on the grounds that the disturbances originated in Government itself. In part, the Duke of Richmond claimed that the Administration's carelessness in 1779 with the Scottish riots had set a precedent for popular uprisings, as well as for the Government's inertia in domestic concerns. However, in his speech before the Lords, he asserted that

> the Quebec Act was the real source of the discontents, and not the repeal of the Acts relative to Popery; the repealing Act merely gave toleration in matters of conscience to the Roman Catholics, and was in fact, an innocent, nay a laudable measure, but there was an essential difference between religious toleration and the establishment of a religion; the Quebec Act absolutely established the Popish religion in Canada, by sending a Popish bishop there, and allowing every part of the exercise of that dangerous and intolerant religion.

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[3] ***Ibid.***, vol. xxi, 671.

Richmond's solution was to repeal the Quebec Act, an opportunity he advised the Administration to seize while it could.[4] The Earl of Shelburne supported this call for repeal of the Quebec Act along with the punishment of the rioters and the regulation of the police of Westminster. Shelburne claimed that the Relief Act was "an innocent Act" provided that Government had done its duty to provide checks and balances for the extension of popery.[5]

The proposed repeal of the Quebec Act by the Shelburne group was certainly opportunistic given the popular outcry against Government but it was also consistent with the Chathamites earlier stance on the Quebec Act. By tracing the tumults back to the Quebec Act, the Duke of Richmond was consistent in his overall view since 1774 that the Quebec Act was the result of a corrupt system of Government and the instigator in the breakdown of parliamentary authority. As such, it was an attempt to blame the Ministry for the disturbances rather than to accept that the Opposition's policy had provoked the outrage. At the same time, the Quebec Act was a particularly attractive scapegoat for the Shelburne group, considering that the Act was a policy legislated overseas. Blaming the Quebec Act projected the problem facing Parliament onto the Empire, rather than accepting that English Protestants rejected the Roman Catholic relief designed by Parliament. Furthermore, the Duke of Richmond had long maintained that the Quebec Act had not been acceptable to the inhabitants of Quebec, so that if the Act was repealed, there would be little resistance from the British subjects and the Canadians. Most importantly, its repeal would assure the English crowds that Catholicism was not on the increase. A repeal of the Roman Catholic Relief Act would be less safe, granted that it would only antagonize Roman Catholics, provoking further popular outcry in England and Ireland. A repeal of the Relief Act was less appealing when social disturbances already threatened to overturn the authority of Parliament.

Not all Opposition members, however, agreed with the Duke of Richmond and Shelburne in their analysis of the ills of the situation. The Marquis of Rockingham opposed the proposal to repeal the Quebec Act on the grounds that it was "more wise to proceed immediately to other points."[6] He, instead, reproached the ministers for having called in the military against the English crowd. Charges were made that the King had ill-used his prerogative in a matter which ran counter to parliamentary tradition on the use of military force in civil affairs. The lack of

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[4] ***Ibid.***, vol. xxi, 677.
[5] ***Ibid.***, vol. xxi, 678.
[6] ***Ibid.***, vol. xxi, 684.

support for the repeal of the Quebec Act marked what was to become a controversy in policy on the Opposition's position with regard to the petitions and the relief measure. The two groups, Rockingham and Shelburne, did in fact remain divided during the debates on the origins of the riots and into the succeeding session of Parliament.[7]

The confusion in Parliament was described by Horace Walpole as "an universal *anarchy of opinion*; no three men agree on any three propositions."[8] Administration and Opposition alike could not yield to any one policy addressing the riots and the petitions. John Wilkes overtly declared that he was opposed to the London petition, claiming that it did not represent the true opinion of the City council. He attacked Frederick Bull for his support of the Association movement. According to Burke, Parliament had no choice but to consider the peoples' petition given the serious attacks made on the City and Members of Parliament.[9] Despite the break between Shelburne and Rockingham, it is apparent that the opposition was attempting to rally in order to determine the steps to be taken with regard to the demanded repeal of the Relief Act. In a letter dated 12 June 1780 to the Marquis of Rockingham, the Duke of Richmond revealed that Rockingham and Charles James Fox were anxious to come to some agreement as to the policy to be pursued by the Opposition. Richmond declared that "my mind is made up never to consent to that measure, but to oppose it, and have no better support than the folly and wickedness of the present Ministers and councils, is not prudent or wise."[10] It is clear that Richmond planned to defend the Relief Act by criticizing the Ministry for what Richmond had long argued was their subversion of the Constitution. Fox supported Richmond's stand in favor of the Relief Act in the Commons.[11] Lord Shelburne, Lord Camden and the Duke of Grafton, had developed a reputation for anti-papist attitudes, especially in the case of the latter when Grafton opted for a modification of the Catholic Relief Act.[12]

Yet, while the Opposition may have seen the potential to strengthen their cause for reform on the basis of ministerial incompetence and corruption, the issues raised by the riots were greater than party loyalty. Burke stressed the need for a

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[7] Walpole described Rockingham and Shelburne by late June as "bitter enemies." In Horace Walpole to Mason, 29 June 1780, ***Horace Walpole's Correspondence with the Rev. William Mason, II***, W.S. Lewis, ed., vol. 29, 63.

[8] ***Ibid.***, vol. 29, p. 63.

[9] Burke to Richard Shackleton, 14 June 1780, ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood, ed., vol. iv,. 247.

[10] Duke of Richmond to the Marquis of Rockingham, 12 June 1780, ***Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and His Contemporaries***, Albemarle, George Thomas, Earl of ed., vol. ii, 419.

[11] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xxi, 706.

[12] Walpole called them anti-papistic. See Horace Walpole to Mason, 29 June 1780, ***Horace Walpole's Correspondence with the Rev. William Mason, II***, W.S. Lewis, ed., vol. 29, 63. For Grafton's proposal see W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xxi, 754.

speedy decision from Government at large, not to be claimed by any one faction in Parliament, in order to dispel the impression of fear and subversion of Westminster in the eyes of the populace.[13] A repeal of the Roman Catholic Relief Act was in his view "unnatural" and "impracticable".

The Administration also tended toward a full rejection of any motion which sought to repeal the Bill. Lord North stated very clearly in a letter to Burke that the Administration "[intended] to oppose any motion for the repeal of the Bill, 18th Geo: 3d or For any Bill whatsoever; we do not intend to go into any enquiry of Facts, or to call any witnesses, but to confine ourselves merely to examine whether the Act of the 18th of his Majesty is liable to the objections thrown out against it by the Petition."[14] Lord North further wrote that he agreed with Burke's resolution "That this House hath no cause to apprehend, that any detriment whatsoever hath arisen, or is likely to arise to our happy Constitution in Church and State" from the 1778 Act.[15] The Committee that was set up by the House of Commons on 6 June, also consisted of a wide range of opinions. The committee members were: Sir George Savile, Welbore Ellis[16], David Hartley[17], Edmund Burke, John Wilkes in the capacity of the Recorder of London, Sir William Guise[18], William Hussey[19], Nathaniel Polhill.[20]

Lord North stated in the Commons on 19 June that since tranquillity had been restored to the city, the Act was to undergo an immediate inquiry; but he requested that the House carefully consider the consequences of a repeal.[21] Why did Lord North strongly want to avoid a repeal of the Relief Act, a measure which his

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[13] Burke's exact words were, "But it will certainly confirm several that are wavering, both on your side and on ours; and will put a stop to those loose Ideas, which are wandering about to find an Owner." Burke to Alexander Wedderburn, Lord Loughborough, 15 June 1780, ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood, ed., vol. iv, 248.

[14] Lord North to Edmund Burke, [18 June 1780], ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood, ed., vol. iv, 250.

[15] The editor of Burke's correspondences notes that Burke had five resolutions, a copy of which exists in the MS at Sheffield, BK 8*b*. Apparently, Burke's resolutions closely resembled of Lord North, those except for the third which involved Burke's interpretation of toleration. See Lord North to Edmund Burke, [18 June 1780], ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood, ed., vol. iv, 251.

[16] Ellis tended to vote with the Administration on most things, supporting the American policy of 1774-1780. L. Namier and J. Brooke, ***The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790***, vol.ii, 397-400.

[17] Either David, member for Kingston-upon-Hull or his brother Winchcombe Henry, member for Berkshire. Both opposed North's Government. ***Ibid.***, vol.ii, 592-94.

[18] Guise was an independent within Opposition who represented the Gloucestershire interest. ***Ibid.***, vol.ii, 560.

[19] Hussey represented Salisbury. He strongly opposed the American War and the North Ministry. ***Ibid.***, vol.ii, 663.

[20] Polhill was an active member of the Metropolitan Protestant Association and he had reportedly seconded Lord George Gordon's motion for a petition on 26 May 1780. He had a history of voting regularly against the North Government and ran in the 1774 elections as a Wilkite. ***Ibid.***, vol.ii, 306.

[21] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xxi, 700.

Administration had not designed? Lord North had argued before the House on 20 June that he would not give in to the petitions after the violence of the riots because it would set a precedent for caving in to the crowd. He thought that the religious penal laws were outdated and had often been unfair. Most importantly, he stressed the importance of Catholics to the market: "if you prevent the papists from purchasing land, you take one purchaser out of the market, and hurt thereby property." North stated that he would oppose the repeal on the score of policy, claiming that popery had been in decline since the Revolution. North's arguments were clearly linked to the difficulties with Ireland and the push for the liberalization of trade between London and Dublin. A repeal of the Act would have antagonized the Irish Catholics. Furthermore, North realized that a repeal would have been inexpedient following the widespread show of loyalty sponsored by the Catholic communities around Britain and Ireland in 1778. To betray the Oaths of Allegiances made by the Catholics and to take away their liberties would have produced retaliation. Lord North also did not want to arm extreme Protestants against Catholics, whose property would be vulnerable in the case of a repeal.

On 20 June, the House went into committee to examine the petitions for the repeal of the Act. Joseph Mawbey claimed that popery was on the increase and that his constituents could prove that, "a Popish chapel, which before the Act would hold 150 or 200 persons, had been so increased as to receive 3, 000, and that they could prove 2, 000 persons had been assembled at a time."[22] Sir George Savile gave his opinion that there should be an opportunity given where the facts be presented, "for if it was true that schools and seminaries had increased, he thought some steps should be taken about them." Savile did maintain his support for the Act in so far as the clauses enabled Catholics to own and inherit land.

Administration supporters also came forward on the issue of Protestants being educated by Catholics. Lord Beauchamp reminded the House of the fact that the head of the Church had supported the Catholic Relief Act on the grounds that it laid the foundation for toleration in Ireland; that civil and religious liberty went together; that the Bill laid the foundation for the acquisition of landed property, which was harmless; and that the papists were double taxed on the land tax, a repeal of which seemed proper but which did not succeed. Beauchamp argued that the petition was

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[22] Mawbey was considered to be an independent in Opposition in the Commons. He did, however, have strong ties with the Rockingham group, voting consistently with them during the American crisis of the 1770's. See L. Namier and J. Brooke, ***The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790***, vol.iii, 122. For his speech on the increase of popery see W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xxi, 702-3.

ill-founded in regard to the increase of popery. He did, however, acknowledge that if Protestants were being educated by the papists, there should be a new law restricting such activities. Charles Ambler, an Administration supporter who had spoken in support of the Bill in 1778, now claimed that the Bill went too far and that he heartily supported a partial repeal of the Act.

Charles James Fox declared himself a friend to universal toleration. Contrary to his argument in 1778 in favor of the repeal of the Quebec Act, he stated that "he could not think the popish religion incompatible with Government, nor civil liberty; because, in looking round the world, he saw that Switzerland, where democracy reigned universally in the fullest manner, it flourished most in cantons of that religion."[23] This departure from his earlier position on the Quebec Act, that popery was incompatible with Government, shows either hypocrisy at its most extreme or a more clear conviction on reform. In a show of disdain for the role of the established Church, Fox claimed that the signatures of the clergy on the petition meant very little: that "if at the Reformation their opinions had decided the matter, we should have had no Reformation." One may read into these statements made by Fox the mood of parliamentary reform and the decreased importance, in his mind at least, of the clergy's involvement in state affairs. Fox would have interpreted his own position for Catholic Relief as Parliament strictly offering Catholics greater liberty of conscience within the framework of the existing penal laws.

Like his counterparts in the Lords, Alderman Frederick Bull raised the issue of the Quebec Act in the House of Commons. Unlike the Duke of Richmond and Shelburne, however, Bull used the Act as an example of the increase of popery in the Kingdom rather than as an instrument acknowledging the need for reform. He claimed that a general alarm ought to have spread throughout the nation once the Quebec Act had come into being. The Quebec Act had set a precedent for the problems of the increase in popery as well as leading the people to think that the House encouraged that religion. Joseph Mawbey came to the defense of Bull, in contradiction to his usual ties with the Rockingham group, and agreed that:

> Papists, by the capitulation of Quebec, were to be suffered the free exercise of their religion; but he had heard, our court had not only permitted a Roman Catholic to exercise his functions there, 14 or 15 years ago, but had actually given him a salary. Popery was not only tolerated, but established, by the execrable Quebec Bill, afterwards; a

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[23] ***Ibid.***, vol. xxi, 706.

> Bill founded in despotism and tyranny, and which, in the last parliament, he had always opposed.[24]

It is interesting that these references to the Quebec Act did not rally those Members who had voted for its repeal in 1775 and 1778. One might conclude that the Rockingham supporters and other Commoners did not make the connection because the Quebec Act was an imperial policy and the Relief Act was a domestic measure. More likely, they did not want to aggravate an already difficult debate. To revive the old issues of the Quebec Act was only to feed the fires of the people against Government.

The Committee that had been set up by the House in early June presented five resolutions to the Commons on 20 June 1780. It presented the following resolutions: that the Act had been misrepresented and misunderstood; that the Act did not repeal or alter, or in any manner invalidate or render ineffectual the earlier statutes of King William's reign to prohibit the exercise of the popish religion; that no ecclesiastical or spiritual jurisdiction or authority was given by the Act to the Pope or the See of Rome; that the House had and would always watch over the interests of the Protestant religion and that all attempts to seduce the youth of the Kingdom from the established Church to popery would be considered criminal according to the laws in force and as were proper to be subject to further regulation; that all attempts to disquiet the minds of the people by misrepresenting the Act to be "inconsistent with the safety or irreconcilable to the principles of the Protestant religion have a manifest tendency to disturb public peace, to break unison necessary a this Time, to bring Dishonour on the National Character, to discredit the Protestant religion in the Eyes of other Nations, and to furnish occasion for the Renewal of the Persecution of our Protestant Brethren in other Countries."[25] Following this discussion the House moved that a bill be brought in to restrain the Roman Catholics from teaching Protestant youth.

There are several reasons why the Committee and the House resolved that a Restraining Bill was expedient after having studied the petitions. Rather than repeal the Relief Act, the Commons believed that the Restraining Bill might subdue the concerns of the petitioners. The signatures on the petitions having exceeded 20,000, Parliament could not justify ignoring the issue. While it was a concession on the part of the Commons to address the citizens' concerns, it really sought to clarify the House's own understanding of the notion of the "freedom of conscience". If there was

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[24] ***Ibid.***, vol. xxi, 713.
[25] ***Journals of the House of Commons***, vol. xxxvii, 912.

an increase of popery because Protestants were being converted, then it was the responsibility of the House to ensure that there was a provision to the Act which forbade the activity. In this way, the House preserved the integrity of Parliament in civil and ecclesiastical affairs, while setting in motion a definition of toleration which was conducive to the security of the Protestant religion.

Response to the Restraining Bill was varied. Both John Dunning and Sir George Savile, the designers of the Relief Act supported the new clause. Dunning did not think it necessary, but claimed that it was a conciliatory measure for the benefit of the people.[26] Savile argued that Catholics should not be allowed to take on Protestant apprentices. Lord Beauchamp did not support the Bill, nor did he agree with Savile's proposal that there be a restraint placed on Protestant apprenticeship under Catholics, because the effect would be to limit trade and commerce.[27] Lord Mansfield interpreted the Bill as a means of quelling the "ill-founded" apprehension of the people that papists would have access to Protestant children of the poor, and therefore insisted that the Bill include the day-schools.[28] Joseph Mawbey, for further clarification of the purpose of the Bill, insisted that an amendment be added, "that nothing in the Act contained shall be construed to extend to repeal, or in any manner invalidate any of the laws now in being respecting papists or persons professing the Popish religion."[29]

Edmund Burke resisted all claims that Catholics had increased or that the Bill was even necessary. Burke viewed the entire debate as inconsistent with the spirit of toleration which allegedly had allowed for the Bill in the first place. According to Burke, a policy of toleration should include all Dissenters, Catholic and Protestant. He had therefore supported a plan "... let the Dissenters perceive, that all toleration is on the same bottom. The Scheme of the rest is to mark the Security of the Church, and the danger to which this Protestant fury may expose their Brethren abroad."[30] Lord North, on the other hand, did not believe that the House of Commons could get away with the toleration espoused by Burke: "but I think that many people would be alarm'd if the House of Commons were to adopt so large and extensive a plan of toleration as they seem to hold out." North went on to explain that while he did not believe that his countrymen would wish that the penal laws be strictly executed, he

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[26] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol. xxi, 724.
[27] ***Ibid.***, vol. xxi, 717.
[28] ***Ibid.***, vol. xxi, 726.
[29] ***Ibid.***, vol. xxi,726.
[30] Burke to Alexander Wedderburn, Lord Loughborough, 15 June 1780, ***Burke's Correspondence***, J. Wood, ed., vol. iv, 248.

foresaw worse consequences if an intention to repeal the penal laws "were to spread among the people at large, and [were] countenanced by any vote of the House of Commons."[31] In other words, the House of Commons had to endorse a form of toleration defined according to what the populace was willing to accept. Burke had protested against the resolution to Lord North, who wrote back that he had no objection "to such an alteration of the Resolution concerning schools, as may remove all idea of any wish in Parliament to carry the Penal Laws into execution."[32] George III agreed with North's resolution and commended the Committee for having introduced the Bill for preventing the educating of Protestants at popish schools. Considering that George III was a devout Anglican, and firmly against dissent of any kind, it is remarkable that he believed that "it was the only grievance that seemed to have the smallest foundation."[33]

While the House of Commons had designed the Bill with the idea that it would conciliate by a provision in the case of an increase in Catholicism, the Bishops in the House of Lords arrived at another conclusion. Most peers were of the opinion that Protestant children should not be educated by papists. The Archbishop of Canterbury had stated that "if your lordships should be of opinion that Popish schools had increased, and that Protestant children were seduced to be educated in them by Romish teachers in the principles of their religion, the provisions in this Bill would be very proper and should meet with his concurrence." The point of increase having been made by the head of the established church led the Lords to move for what the Commons had avoided, an examination of the facts. The Bishops were ordered on 3 July to procure from their parochial clergy, "An Account of the number of papists or reputed papists, and cause the same to be laid before the House on the first day of the next session of Parliament."[34] The Restraining Bill as it emerged from the Commons was therefore refused passage in the Lords on 5 July 1780 for what appears to have been a concern that the facts had not been clearly presented. One must interpret the failure of the Lords to seize upon the Restraining Bill proposed by the Commons did not agree that the Bill was necessary in order to address the popular outcry. It is evident from the debates that the Peers preferred to let the Protestant movement dissipate before committing Parliament to a policy which had been hastily designed with little consideration of the consequences. There is also some suggestion

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31 Lord North to Edmund Burke, [18 June 1780], ***Ibid.***, vol. iv, 251.
32 [letter of [19 June], MS at Shefield]. ***Ibid.***, vol. iv, 251.
33 George III to Lord North, 21 June 1780, ***The Correspondence of King George the Third***, Sir J. Fortescue, ed., vol. v, 89.
34 ***Journals of the House of Lords***, vol. xxxvi, 169.

that the Bishops wanted to produce their own Bill dealing with the Roman Catholics, instead of accepting the policy negotiated by the Commons. In this case, the failure to pass Savile's Restraining Bill was more a matter of the Upper House exerting legislative authority in ecclesiastical affairs than of flaws in the Act.

The returns to the inquiry which the Lords had ordered to be made on the number of papists in England and Wales were laid on the table in early 1781. On 19 March 1781, the debates began on what appeared to be an increase of the Roman Catholics. Earl Ferrers, the Peer who had moved for an account of the numbers of the papists in the Kingdom, moved that the Peers meet at the end of the month to take into consideration the propriety of repealing all the penal statutes against Roman Catholics. He stated that he would wish to see "less rigour and more efficacy introduced into the laws for preventing the growth of popery." Earl Ferrers had, however, based the rapid increase of popery in England entirely on the diocese of Chester. The Bishop of Chester had risen to challenge the statement, claiming that the noble lord had miscalculated, and that the increase of Roman Catholics was not as rapid as the increase of Protestants. He further stated that he did not agree to a full repeal of the penal statutes because they had successfully removed the evils they had been trying to prevent.[35] While not opposed to the bringing in of a bill for checking the design of popery, the Bishop of Chester thought that "it might not perhaps be quite politic to revive the subject." On 27 March, Ferrers agreed with the Bishop of Chester that the measure which he had proposed was unnecessary for the timebeing and the issue was dropped.

Even though a bill for restraining Catholics had not been passed or even pursued into the following sessions of Parliament, it is clear that by 1781 politicians were not prepared to re-address the issue for fear of public outcry. Parliamentarians believed that the Relief Act had not given any unlimited freedoms to Roman Catholics, but they did acknowledge that it was the responsibility of Parliament to guarantee that the Protestant religion was secured. Lord Mansfield concluded at the trial of Lord George Gordon that the security of the state was not to be sacrificed for the sake of religious conscience:

> Thus much let me say, it is most injurious to say this bill, called Sir George Savile's, is a toleration of Popery. I cannot deny that, where the safety of the state is not concerned, my own opinion is, that men should not be punished for mere matter of conscience, and barely worshipping God in their own way: but where what is alleged as matter of conscience is dangerous or prejudicial to the state, which is

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[35] W. Cobbett, ***Parliamentary History of England***, vol.xxi, 1377.

> the case of Popery, the safety of the state is the supreme law, and an erroneous religion, so far as upon principles of sound policy that safety requires, ought to be restrained and prohibited; no good man has ever defended the many penal laws against Papists upon another ground: but his bill is not a toleration, it only takes away the penalties of one act out of many.[36]

One may interpret Mansfield's concurrence on Savile's Bill, the Roman Catholic Relief Act, as a declaration that personal beliefs on toleration were to be sacrificed for the expediency of the state. To claim that Savile's Bill was a toleration of popery was to confuse mere relief, which creates the condition of more toleration, with the philosophical principle of the matter of conscience. He was also clarifying that toleration was a right to be solely defined by Parliament, despite the philosophical sense of the times. According to Mansfield, by the Act of Toleration of 1688, Parliament had given the right to Protestant Dissenters to practice freely their religion.[37] The freedom to practice a religion, as defined by the Act of Toleration was, according to Mansfield, the legal meaning of toleration. To say that Savile's Act tolerated Catholics was also to suggest that Catholics were on an equal footing according to the law with the Protestant Dissenters. The security of the state was therefore jeopardized when the philosophical intent was confused with the legal meaning of toleration.

It is apparent that politicians had differed greatly in their understanding of religious toleration when the Catholic Relief Act had been introduced in 1778. The Rockingham group, particularly Burke, viewed religious toleration as an acknowledgment by the established Church that it neither could, nor had the right to, restrict the Dissenters of all types from a freedom of conscience. Catholic Relief was considered to be a first step in gaining ground in relief for Protestant Dissenters, a policy which the Rockingham Whigs had supported since the early 1770's. While relief for Protestant Dissenters had failed repeatedly since the Act of Toleration of 1688, supporters of their cause used the Quebec Act in order to justify an expanded toleration in domestic affairs to other sects. Opponents of the Quebec Act maintained that the Relief Act was acceptable on the grounds that it merely granted a toleration

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36 Proceedings against Lord George Gordon for High Treason, 1781. ***A Complete Collection of State Trials***, T. B. Howell, ed., vol. xxi, 645.

37 According to James Paterson, Mansfield had determined in the case Harrison v. Evans in 1767, that the Toleration Act of William III permitted and allowed the Dissenters' way of worship. Mansfield rendered that the Dissenters' way of worship was not only exempted from punishment but that it was established, and as such was put under the protection of the law. See J. Paterson, ***The Liberty of the Press, Speech, and Public Worship, being Commentaries on the Liberty of the subject and the Laws of England***, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1880) 526.

where the former established the religion in Quebec. By arguing that the Protestant Religion had no security nor any means of becoming established there, opponents could claim higher moral ground in defense of the established church as a means of denouncing Lord North's majority Parliament in 1774. Yet, because Parliament chose not to extend the religious penal laws to Quebec, there was a 'spirit of innovation' prevalent in Parliament and an acknowledgment that the new territories of the Crown were to be subject to a new order which included Roman Catholics in a civil and religious legal context. Thus, the Opposition sought to benefit from the contrast to be made between "established" and "tolerated" religion as well as the spirit of the times, in order to persuade Parliament that the toleration of Dissenters could mean greater civil and religious liberties.

The Administration, on the other hand, had argued that the Quebec Act was a toleration of the Roman Catholic population in the colony. The Act resolved a fundamental problem of including Roman Catholics in a Protestant Empire. Ireland served as an example of the effects of religious penal laws over the majority, a policy which the Administration had denounced as cruel and unjust during the Catholic Relief debates. The Catholic Relief Act was, according to the Administration, merely a repeal of the more oppressive laws which kept Catholics in England and Ireland from inheriting and owning any land, an antagonizing factor which could only further threaten unity within the Empire.

One must conclude, then, that religious toleration fluctuated between historical necessity and callous expediency. The North Administration understood religious toleration according to the political necessity of individual circumstances. It was not North's intent that the toleration granted to Roman Catholics in Quebec set the precedent for a toleration at home. The Opposition, however, determined that one instance of toleration implied an unlimited boundary for a grander definition. The Quebec Act taught that the spirit of innovation had influenced Parliament in 1774 so much so that anti-catholic language could not influence its repeal in 1775 or 1778. The Act also showed that Parliament was no longer committed to the religious penal laws as they then stood. It is not surprising that members of the Opposition, who declared themselves champions of religious and civil liberties, came forward within four years of the Quebec Act with a policy to relieve Roman Catholics in Ireland and England from the religious penal laws restricting property and practice. Furthermore, it is not surprising that Parliament as a whole body, supported the relaxation of these laws on the grounds that they had outlived their original purpose, which was to force

political and religious obedience to the established order against the threat of jacobitism.

Postscript

This study attempted to show that an imperial issue had unleashed forces of innovation which reshaped the relationship between Britain and Empire, and challenged the traditional relationship between Church and State. Historians studying the Catholic question in British politics or the history of Protestant dissent have neglected the importance of the Quebec Act as a ground-breaking policy with domestic implications. When the Quebec Act's place in the history of religious toleration is taken into account, it is clear that the emancipation of Catholics had not merely begun with the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1778 but had been set ablaze by the discussion over Quebec policy. To ignore the link between Quebec policy and the domestic fight for emancipation in later years is to miss the significance of the confidence with which parliamentarians formulated a relief measure in 1778, the first of its kind on British soil since the laws had come into effect during the reign of William III.

Despite the social upheaval associated with the Roman Catholic Relief Act in June 1780, politicians proceeded with their program for parliamentary and legal reform. Only two years following the Gordon Riots, the Westminster Parliament sanctioned Catholic emancipation in Ireland, granting Catholics the freedom to purchase land and to establish their own schools. A second relief measure was passed in England in 1791, giving a legal existence to registered Catholic places of worship. By taking the new Oath of Allegiance, the Roman Catholic subject was exempted from registering his deeds and wills and he could take on a profession without having to take an oath of supremacy or the oath against transubstantiation. The molesting of Catholic chapels was punishable in the same way as harm committed against Protestant dissenting churches.[1] An Act of 1793 passed by the Irish Parliament also conferred the franchise on Roman Catholics on the same terms as Protestants, allowing them to receive degrees and to hold fellowships at Dublin University. While Catholics were still barred from Parliament and most offices until the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, it is clear that Catholic emancipation resulted from years of discussion and careful consideration dating from the Quebec Act debates.

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[1] J. Paterson, ***Liberty of the Press, Speech and Publish Worship, being Commentaries on the Liberty of the subject and the Laws of England***, 542.

Politicians of the late eighteenth century had approached reform of the religious penal laws with the same rigor and conviction as they had the parliamentary reform process. John Locke, who had himself favored penal laws against Catholics, had nonetheless recommended a general policy of toleration as a precondition for domestic peace. The period that was examined throughout this study was aptly described in the following prophetic vision of Locke's:

> I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion, and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other. If this be not done, there can be no end put to the controversies that will be always arising between those that have, or at least pretend to have, on the one side, a concernment for the interest of men's souls, and, on the other side, a care of the commonwealth. [2]

The unavoidable problem facing politicians was by the late eighteenth century how to factor Roman Catholics into laws traditionally unfavorable toward Dissenters from the established Church. In the age of Enlightenment and the expansion of Great Britain into Empire, bringing new subjects under the British Crown demanded flexibility and creative measures of government. Indeed, the conquest of Grenada and Quebec in the Seven Years War provided "enlightened" individuals with the opportunity to formulate new laws which were more conducive to the multi-religious Empire. The Quebec Act contributed to this emerging understanding of toleration as well as to Britain's own domestic political and religious reform.

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[2] John Locke, ***A Letter concerning Toleration***, in ***The Works of John Locke***, (London: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1963), vol. vi, 9.

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